ARMAZINDY

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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ARMAZINDY

BY

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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James Whitcomb Riley

TO

HENRY EITEL

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ARMAZINDY

ARMAZINDY

ARMAZINDY;—fambily name
Ballenger,—you'll find the same,
As her daddy answered it,
In the old War-rickords yit,—
And, like him, she's airnt the good
Will o' all the neighberhood.—
Name ain't down in *History*,—
But, i jucks! it *ort* to be!
Folks is got respec' fer *her*—
Armazindy Ballenger!—
'Specially the ones 'at knows
Fac's o' how her story goes
From the start:—Her father blowed
Up—eternally furloughed—
When the old "Sultana" bu'st,
And sich men wuz needed wusst.—
Armazindy, 'bout fourteen-
Year-old then—and thin and lean
As a kill-dee,—but—*my la!*—
Blamedest nerve you ever saw!
The girl's mother'd *allus* ben
Sickly—wuz consumpted when
Word come 'bout her husband.—So
Folks perdicted *she'd* soon go—

(Kind o' grief *I* understand,
Losin' *my* companion,—and
Still a widower—and still
Hinted at, like neighbers will!)
So, appinted, as folks said,
Ballenger a-bein' dead,
Widder, 'peared-like, gradjully,
Jes grieved after him tel *she*
Died, nex' Aprile wuz a year,—
And, in Armazindy's keer
Leavin' the two twins, as well
As her pore old miz'able
Old-maid aunty 'at had ben
Struck with palsy, and wuz then
Jes a he'pless charge on *her*—
Armazindy Ballenger.

Jevver watch a primrose 'bout
Minute 'fore it blossoms out—
Kindo' loosen-like, and blow
Up its muscles, don't you know,
And, all suddent, bu'st and bloom
Out life-size?—Well, I persume
'At's the only measure I
Kin size Armazindy by!—
Jes a *child*, *one* minute,—nex',
Woman-grown, in all respec's

And intents and purposuz—
'At's what Armazindy wuz!

Jes a *child*, I tell ye! Yit
She made things git up and git
Round that little farm o' hern!—
Shouldered all the whole concern;—
Feed the stock, and milk the cows—
Run the *farm* and run the *house!*—
Only thing she didn't do
Wuz to plow and harvest too—
But the house and childern took
Lots o' keer—and had to look
After her old fittified
Grand-aunt.—Lord! ye could a-cried,
Seein' Armazindy smile,
'Peared-like, sweeter all the while!
And I've heerd her laugh and say:—
"Jes afore Pap marched away,
He says 'I depend on *you*,
Armazindy, come what may—
You must be a Soldier, too!'"

Neighbers, from the fust, 'ud come—
And she'd *let* 'em help her *some*,—
"Thanky, maam!" and "Thanky, sir!"
But no charity fer *her!*—

"*She* could raise the means to pay
Fer her farm-hands ever' day
Sich wuz needed!"—And she *could*—
In cash-money jes as good
As farm-produc's ever brung
Their perducer, *old* er young!
So folks humored her and smiled,
And at last wuz rickonciled
Fer to let her have her own
Way about it.—But a-goin'
Past to town, they'd stop and see
"Armazindy's fambily,"
As they'd allus laugh and say,
And look sorry right away,
Thinkin' of her Pap, and how
He'd indorse his "Soldier" now!

Course *she* couldn't never be
Much in young folks' company—
Plenty of *in*-vites to go,
But das't leave the house, you know—
'Less'n *Sund'ys* sometimes, when
Some old *Granny* 'd come and 'ten'
Things, while Armazindy *has*
Got away fer Church er "Class."
Most the youngsters *liked* her—and
'Twuzn't hard to understand,—

Fer, by time she wuz sixteen,
Purtier girl you never seen—
'Ceptin' she lacked schoolin', ner
Couldn't rag out stylisher—
Like some *neighber*-girls, ner thumb
On their blame melodium,
Whilse their pore old mothers sloshed
Round the old back-porch and washed
Their clothes fer 'em—rubbed and scrubbed
Fer girls 'd ort to jes ben clubbed!

—And jes sich a girl wuz Jule
Reddinhouse.—*She'd* ben to school
At *New Thessaly*, i gum!—
Fool before, but that hepped *some*—
'Stablished-like more confidence
'At she *never* had no sense.
But she wuz a cunnin', sly,
Meek and lowly sorto' lie,
'At men-folks like me and you
B'lieves jes 'cause we ortn't to.—
Jes as purty as a snake,
And as *pizen*—Mercy sake!
Well, about them times it wuz,
Young Sol Stephens th'ashed fer us;
And we sent him over to
Armazindy's place to do

Her work fer her.—And-sir! Well—
Mighty little else to tell,—
Sol he fell in love with her—
Armazindy Ballenger!

Bless ye!—'Ll of all the love
'At I've ever yit knowed of,
That-air case o' theirn beat all!
W'y, she *worshiped* him!—And Sol,
'Peared-like, could a-kissed the sod
(Sayin' is) where that girl trod!
Went to town, she did, and bought
Lot o' things 'at neighbers thought
Mighty strange fer *her* to buy,—
Raal chintz dress-goods—and 'way high!—
Cut long in the skyrt,—also
Gaiter-pair o' shoes, you know;
And lace collar;—yes, and fine
Stylish hat, with ivy-vine
And red ribbons, and these-'ere
Artificial flowers and queer
Little beads and spangles, and
Oysturch-feathers round the band!
Wore 'em, Sund'ys, fer awhile—
Kindo' went to church in style,
Sol and Armazindy!—Tel
It was noised round purty well

They wuz *promised.*—And they wuz—
Sich news travels—well it does!—
Pity 'at *that* did!—Fer jes
That-air fac' and nothin' less
Must a-putt it in the mind
O' Jule Reddinhouse to find
Out some dratted way to hatch
Out *some* plan to break the match—
'Cause she *done* it,—*How?* they's none
Knows adzac'ly *what* she done;
Some claims she writ letters to
Sol s folks, up nigh Pleasant View
Somers—and described, you see,
"Armazindy's fambily"—
Hintin' "ef Sol married *her*,
He d jes be pervidin' fer
Them-air twins o' hern, and old
Palsied aunt 'at couldn't hold
Spoon to mouth, and layin' near
Bedrid on to eighteen year,
And still likely, 'pearantly,
To live out the century!"
Well—whatever plan Jule laid
Out to reach the p'int she made,
It wuz *desper't*—And she won,
Finully, by marryun'

Sol herse'f—*e-lopin'*, too,
With him, like she *had* to do,—
'Cause her folks 'ud allus swore
"Jule should never marry pore!"

This-here part the story I
Allus haf to hurry by,—
Way 'at Armazindy jes
Drapped back in her linsey dress,
And grabbed holt her loom, and shet
Her jaws square.—And ef she fret
Any 'bout it—never 'peared
Sign 'at *neighbers* seed er heerd;—
Most folks liked her all the more—
I know *I* did—certain-shore!—
(Course *I'd* knowed her *Pap*, and what
Stock she come of.—Yes, and thought,
And think *yit*, no man on earth
'S worth as much as that girl's worth!)

As fer Jule and Sol, they had
Their sheer!—less o' good than bad!—
Her folks let her go.—They said,
"Spite o' them she'd made her bed
And must sleep in it!"—But she,
'Peared-like, didn't sleep so free
As she ust to—ner so *late*,
Ner so *fine*, I'm here to state!—

Sol wuz pore, of course, and she
Wuzn't ust to poverty—
Ner she didn't 'pear to jes
'Filiate with lonesomeness,—
'Cause Sol *he* wuz off and out
With his th'asher nigh about
Half the time; er, season done,
He'd be off mi-anderun
Round the country, here and there,
Swoppin' hosses. Well, that-air
Kindo' livin' didn't suit
Jule a bit!—and then, to boot,
She had now the keer o' two
Her own childern—and to do
Her own work and cookin'—yes,
And sometimes fer *hands*, I guess,
Well as fambily of her own.—
Cut her pride clean to the bone!
So how *could* the whole thing end?—
She set down, one night, and penned
A short note, like—'at she sewed
On the childern's blanket—blowed
Out the candle—pulled the door
To close after her—and, shore-
Footed as a cat is, clumb
In a rigg there and left home,

With a man a-drivin' who
"Loved her ever fond and true,"
As her note went on to say,
When Sol read the thing next day.

Really didn't 'pear to be
Extry waste o' sympathy
Over Sol—pore feller!—Yit,
Sake o' them-air little bit
O' two *orphants*—as you might
Call 'em *then*, by law and right,—
Sol's old friends wuz sorry, and
Tried to hold him out their hand
Same as allus: But he'd flinch—
Tel, jes 'peared like, inch by inch,
He let *all* holts go; and so
Took to drinkin', don't you know,—
Tel, to make a long tale short,
He wuz fuller than he ort
To a-ben, at work one day
'Bout his th'asher, and give way,
Kindo'-like, and fell and ketched
In the beltin'.
.....Rid and fetched
Armazindy to him.—He
Begged me to.—But time 'at she
Reached his side, he smiled and *tried*
To speak—Couldn't. So he died.....

Hands all turned and left her there
And went somers else—*some*where.
Last, she called us back—in clear
Voice as man'll ever hear—
Clear and stiddy, 'peared to me,
As her old Pap's ust to be.—
Give us orders what to do
'Bout the body—hepped us, too.
So it wuz, Sol Stephens passed
'N Armazindy's hands at last.
More'n that, she claimed 'at she
Had consent from him to be
Mother to his children—now
'Thout no parents anyhow.

Yes-sir! and she's *got* 'em, too,—
Folks saw nothin' else 'ud do—
So they let her have *her way*—
Like she's doin' yit to-day!
Years now, I've ben coaxin' her—
Armazindy Ballenger—
To in-large her fambily
Jes *one* more by takin' *me*—
Which I'm feared she never will,
Though I'm lectioneerin' still.

THE OLD TRUNDLE-BED

O THE old trundle-bed where I slept when a boy!
What canopied king might not covet the joy?
The glory and peace of that slumber of mine,
Like a long, gracious rest in the bosom divine:
The quaint, homely couch, hidden close from the light,
But daintily drawn from its hiding at night.
O a nest of delight, from the foot to the head,
Was the queer little, dear little, old trundle-bed!

O the old trundle-bed, where I wondering saw
The stars through the window, and listened with awe
To the sigh of the winds as they tremblingly crept
Through the trees where the robin so restlessly slept:
Where I heard the low, murmurous chirp of the wren,
And the katydid listlessly chirrup again,
Till my fancies grew faint and were drowsily led
Through the maze of the dreams of the old trundle-bed.

O the old trundle-bed! O the old trundle-bed!
With its plump little pillow, and old-fashioned spread;
Its snowy-white sheets, and the blankets above,
Smoothed down and tucked round with the touches of
love;

The voice of my mother to lull me to sleep
With the old fairy-stories my memories keep
Still fresh as the lilies that bloom o'er the head
Once bowed o'er my own in the old trundle-bed.

NATURAL PERVERSITIES

I AM not prone to moralize
In scientific doubt
On certain facts that Nature tries
To puzzle us about,—
For I am no philosopher
Of wise elucidation,
But speak of things as they occur,
From simple observation.

I notice *little* things—to wit:—
I never missed a train
Because I didn't *run* for it;
I never knew it rain
That my umbrella wasn't lent,—
Or, when in my possession,
The sun but wore, to all intent,
A jocular expression.

I never knew a creditor
To dun me for a debt
But I was "cramped" or "busted"; or
I never knew one yet,
When I had plenty in my purse,
To make the least invasion,—
As I, accordingly perverse,
Have courted no occasion.

Nor do I claim to comprehend
  What Nature has in view
In giving us the very friend
  To trust we oughtn't to.—
But so it is: The trusty gun
  Disastrously exploded
Is always sure to be the one
  We didn't think was loaded.

Our moaning is another's mirth,—
  And what is worse by half,
We say the funniest thing on earth
  And never raise a laugh:
Mid friends that love us overwell,
  And sparkling jests and liquor,
Our hearts somehow are liable
  To melt in tears the quicker.

We reach the wrong when most we seek
  The right; in like effect,
We stay the strong and not the weak—
  Do most when we neglect.—
Neglected genius—truth be said—
  As wild and quick as tinder,
The more you seek to help ahead
  The more you seem to hinder.

I've known the least the greatest, too—
And, on the selfsame plan,
The biggest fool I ever knew
Was quite a little man:
We find we ought, and then we won't—
We prove a thing, then doubt it,—
Know *everything* but when we don't
Know *anything* about it.

THE OLD SCHOOL-CHUM

HE puts the poem by, to say
His eyes are not themselves to-day!

A sudden glamour o'er his sight—
A something vague, indefinite—

An oft-recurring blur that blinds
The printed meaning of the lines,

And leaves the mind all dusk and dim
In swimming darkness—strange to him!

It is not childishness, I guess,—
Yet something of the tenderness

That used to wet his lashes when
A boy seems troubling him again;—

The old emotion, sweet and wild,
That drove him truant when a child,

That he might hide the tears that fell
Above the lesson—"Little Nell."

And so it is he puts aside
The poem he has vainly tried

To follow; and, as one who sighs
In failure, through a poor disguise

Of smiles, he dries his tears, to say
His eyes are not themselves to-day.

WRITIN' BACK TO THE HOME-FOLKS

MY dear old friends—It jes beats all,
The way you write a letter
So's ever' *last* line beats the *first*,
And ever' *next*-un's better!—
W'y, ever' fool-thing you putt down
You make so inte*rest*in',
A feller, readin' of em all,
Can't tell which is the *best*-un.

It's all so comfortin' and good,
'Pears-like I almost *hear* ye
And git more sociabler, you know,
And hitch my cheer up near ye
And jes smile on ye like the sun
Acrosst the whole per-rairies
In Aprile when the thaw's begun
And country couples marries.

It's all so good-old-fashioned like
To *talk* jes like we're *thinkin'*,
Without no hidin' back o' fans
And giggle-un and winkin',
Ner sizin' how each-other's dressed—
Like some is allus doin',—
"*Is* Marthy Ellen's basque ben *turned*
Er shore-enough a new-un!"—

Er "ef Steve's city-friend haint jes
'A *lee*tle kindo'-sorto'"—
Er "wears them-air blame eye-glasses
Jes 'cause he hadn't ort to?"—
And so straight on, *dad-libitum*,
Tel all of us feels, *some*way,
Jes like our "comp'ny" wuz the best
When we git up to come 'way!

That's why I like *old* friends like you,—
Jes 'cause you're so *abidin'*.—
Ef I was built to live "*fer keeps*,"
My principul residin'
Would be amongst the folks 'at kep'
Me allus *thinkin'* of 'em,
And sorto' eechin' all the time
To tell 'em how I love 'em.—

Sich folks, you know, I jes love so
I wouldn't live without 'em,
Er couldn't even drap asleep
But what I *dreamp'* about 'em,—
And ef we minded God, I guess
We'd *all* love one-another
Jes like one fam'bly,—me and Pap
And Madaline and Mother.

THE BLIND GIRL

IF I might see his face to-day!—
  He is so happy now!—To hear
His laugh is like a roundelay—
  So ringing-sweet and clear!
His step—I heard it long before
He bounded through the open door
To tell his marriage.—Ah! so kind—
So good he is!—And I—so blind!

But thus he always came to me—
  Me, first of all, he used to bring
His sorrow to—his ecstasy—
  His hopes and everything;
And if I joyed with him or wept,
It was not long *the music* slept,—
And if he sung, or if I played—
Or both,—we were the braver made.

I grew to know and understand
  His every word at every call,—
The gate-latch hinted, and his hand
  In mine confessed it all:
He need not speak one word to me—
He need not sigh—I need not see,—
But just the one touch of his palm,
And I would answer—song or psalm.

He wanted recognition—name—
  He hungered so for higher things,—
The altitudes of power and fame,
  And all that fortune brings:
Till, with his great heart fevered thus,
And aching as impetuous,
I almost wished sometimes that *he*
Were blind and patient made, like me.

But he has won!—I knew he would.—
  Once in the mighty Eastern mart,
I knew his music only could
  Be sung in every heart!
And when he proudly sent me this
From out the great metropolis,
I bent above the graven score
And, weeping, kissed it o'er and o'er.—

And yet not blither sing the birds
  Than this glad melody,—the tune
As sweetly wedded with the words
  As flowers with middle-June;
Had he not *told* me, I had known
It was composed of love alone—
His love for *her*.—And she can see
His happy face eternally!—

While *I*—O God, forgive, I pray!—
  Forgive me that I did so long
To look upon his face to-day!—
  I know the wish was wrong.—
Yea, I am thankful that my sight
Is shielded safe from such delight:—
I can pray better, with this blur
Of blindness—both for him and her.

WE DEFER THINGS

WE say and we say and we say,
We promise, engage and declare,
Till a year from tomorrow is yesterday,
And yesterday is—Where?

THE MUSKINGUM VALLEY

THE Muskingum Valley!—How longin' the gaze
A feller throws back on its long summer-days,
When the smiles of its blossoms and *my* smiles wuz one-
And-the-same, from the rise to the set o' the sun:
Wher' the hills sloped as soft as the dawn down to noon,
And the river run by like an old fiddle-tune,
And the hours glided past as the bubbles 'ud glide,
All so loaferin'-like, 'long the path o' the tide.

In the Muskingum Valley—it 'peared like the skies
Looked lovin' on me as my own mother's eyes,
While the laughin'-sad song of the stream seemed to be
Like a lullaby angels was wastin' on me—
Tel, swimmin' the air, like the gossamer's thread,
'Twixt the blue underneath and the blue overhead,
My thoughts went a-stray in that so-to-speak realm
Wher' Sleep bared her breast as a piller fer them.

In the Muskingum Valley, though far, far a-way,
I know that the winter is bleak there to-day—
No bloom ner perfume on the brambles er trees—
Wher' the buds used to bloom, now the icicles freeze.—
That the grass is all hid 'long the side of the road
Wher' the deep snow has drifted and shifted and blowed—
And I feel in my life the same changes is there,—
The frost in my heart, and the snow in my hair.

But, Muskingum Valley! my memory sees
Not the white on the ground, but the green in the trees—
Not the froze'-over gorge, but the current, as clear
And warm as the drop that has jes trickled here;
Not the choked-up ravine, and the hills topped with snow,
But the grass and the blossoms I knowed long ago
When my little bare feet wundered down wher' the stream
In the Muskingum Valley flowed on like a dream.

FOR THIS CHRISTMAS

YE old-time stave that pealeth out
To Christmas revelers all,
At tavern-tap and wassail bout,
And in ye banquet hall.–
Whiles ye old burden rings again,
Add yet ye verse, as due:
"*God bless you, merry gentlemen*"—
And gentlewomen, too!

A POOR MAN'S WEALTH

A POOR man? Yes, I must confess—
No wealth of gold do I possess;
No pastures fine, with grazing kine,
Nor fields of waving grain are mine;
No foot of fat or fallow land
Where rightfully my feet may stand
The while I claim it as my own—
By deed and title, mine alone.

Ah, poor indeed! perhaps you say—
But spare me your compassion, pray!—
When I ride not—with you—I walk
In Nature's company, and talk
With one who will not slight or slur
The child forever dear to her—
And one who answers back, be sure,
With smile for smile, though I am poor.

And while communing thus, I count
An inner wealth of large amount,—
The wealth of honest purpose blent
With Penury's environment,—
The wealth of owing naught to-day
But debts that I would gladly pay,
With wealth of thanks still unexpressed
With cumulative interest.—

A wealth of patience and content—
For all my ways improvident;
A faith still fondly exercised—
For all my plans unrealized;
A wealth of promises that still,
Howe'er I fail, I hope to fill;
A wealth of charity for those
Who pity me my ragged clothes.

A poor man? Yes, I must confess—
No wealth of gold do I possess;
No pastures fine, with grazing kine,
Nor fields of waving grain are mine;
But ah, my friend! I've wealth, no end!
For millionaires might condescend
To bend the knee and envy me
This opulence of poverty.

THE LITTLE RED RIBBON

THE little red ribbon, the ring and the rose!
The summertime comes, and the summertime goes—
And never a blossom in all of the land
As white as the gleam of her beckoning hand!

The long winter months, and the glare of the snows;
The little red ribbon, the ring and the rose!
And never a glimmer of sun in the skies
As bright as the light of her glorious eyes!

Dreams only are true; but they fade and are gone—
For her face is not here when I waken at dawn;
The little red ribbon, the ring and the rose
Mine only; *hers* only the dream and repose.

I am weary of waiting, and weary of tears,
And my heart wearies, too, all these desolate years,
Moaning over the one only song that it knows,—
The little red ribbon, the ring and the rose!

"HOW DID YOU REST, LAST NIGHT?"

"How did you rest, last night?"—
I've heard my gran'pap say
Them words a thousand times—that's right—
Jes them words thataway!
As punctchul-like as morning dast
To ever heave in sight
Gran'pap 'ud allus haf to ast–
"How did you rest, last night?"

Us young-uns used to grin,
At breakfast, on the sly,
And mock the wobble of his chin
And eyebrows helt so high
And kind: "*How did you rest, last night?*"
We'd mumble and let on
Our voices trimbled, and our sight
Was dim, and hearin' gone.

* * * * * * * * * *

Bad as I used to be,
All I'm a-wantin' is
As puore and ca'm a sleep fer me
And sweet a sleep as his!
And so I pray, on Jedgment Day
To wake, and with its light
See *his* face dawn, and hear him say—
"How did you rest, last night?"

A GOOD-BYE

"GOOD-BYE, my friend!"
He takes her hand—
The pressures blend:
They understand
But vaguely why, with drooping eye,
Each moans—"Good-bye!—Good-bye!"

"Dear friend, good-bye!"
O she could smile
If she might cry
A little while!—
She says, "I ought to smile—but I—
Forgive me—There!—Good-bye!"

"'Good-bye?' Ah, no:
I hate," says he,
"These 'good-byes' so!"
"And *I*," says she,
"Detest them so—why, I should *die*
Were this a *real* 'good-bye!'"

WHEN MAIMIE MARRIED

WHEN Maimie married Charley Brown,
Joy took possession of the town;
The young folks swarmed in happy throngs—
They rang the bells—they caroled songs—
They carpeted the steps that led
Into the church where they were wed;
And up and down the altar-stair
They scattered roses everywhere;
When, in her orange-blossom crown,
Queen Maimie married Charley Brown.

So beautiful she was, it seemed
Men, looking on her, dreamed they dreamed;
And he, the holy man who took
Her hand in his, so thrilled and shook,
The gargoyles round the ceiling's rim
Looked down and leered and grinned at him
Until he half forgot his part
Of sanctity, and felt his heart
Beat worldward through his sacred gown—
When Maimie married Charley Brown.

The bridesmaids kissed her, left and right—
Fond mothers hugged her with delight—
Young men of twenty-seven were seen
To blush like lads of seventeen,

The while they held her hand to quote
Such sentiments as poets wrote.—
Yea, all the heads that Homage bends
Were bowed to her—But O my friends,
My hopes went up—*my* heart went down—
When Maimie married—*Charley Brown!*

"THIS DEAR CHILD-HEARTED WOMAN THAT IS DEAD"

I

THIS woman, with the dear child-heart,
Ye mourn as dead, is—where and what?
With faith as artless as her Art,
I question not,—

But dare divine, and feel, and know
Her blessedness—as hath been writ
In allegory.—Even so
I fashion it:—

II

A stately figure, rapt and awed
In her new guise of Angelhood,
Still lingered, wistful—knowing God
Was very good.—

Her thought's fine whisper filled the pause;
And, listening, the Master smiled,
And lo! the stately angel was
—A little child.

TO A POET-CRITIC

YES,—the bee sings—I confess it—
Sweet as honey—Heaven bless it!—
Yit he'd be a *sweeter* singer
Ef he didn't have no stinger.

AN OLD-TIMER

HERE where the wayward stream
Is restful as a dream,
  And where the banks o'erlook
A pool from out whose deeps
My pleased face upward peeps,
    I cast my hook.

Silence and sunshine blent!—
A Sabbath-like content
  Of wood and wave;—a free-
Hand landscape grandly wrought
Of Summer's brightest thought
    And mastery.—

For here form, light and shade,
And color—all are laid
  With skill so rarely fine,
The eye may even see
The ripple tremblingly
    Lip at the line.

I mark the dragonfly
Flit waveringly by
  In ever-veering flight,

Till, in a hush profound,
I see him eddy round
The "cork" and—'light!

Ho! with the boy's faith then
Brimming my heart again,
And knowing, soon or late,
The "nibble" yet shall roll
Its thrills along the pole,
I—breathless—wait.

THE SILENT VICTORS

MAY 30, 1878

"Dying for victory, cheer on cheer
Thundered on his eager ear."
—CHARLES L. HOLSTEIN

I

DEEP, tender, firm and true, the Nation's heart
Throbs for her gallant heroes passed away,
Who in grim Battle's drama played their part,
And slumber here today.—

Warm hearts that beat their lives out at the shrine
Of Freedom, while our country held its breath
As brave battalions wheeled themselves in line
And marched upon their death:

When Freedom's Flag, its natal wounds scarce healed,
Was torn from peaceful winds and flung again
To shudder in the storm of battle-field—
The elements of men,—

When every star that glittered was a mark
For Treason's ball, and every rippling bar
Of red and white was sullied with the dark
And purple stain of war:

When angry guns, like famished beasts of prey,
Were howling o'er their gory feast of lives,
And sending dismal echoes far away
To mothers, maids, and wives:—

The mother, kneeling in the empty night,
With pleading hands uplifted for the son
Who, even as she prayed, had fought the fight—
The victory had won:

The wife, with trembling hand that wrote to say
The babe was waiting for the sire's caress—
The letter meeting that upon the way,—
The babe was fatherless:

The maiden, with her lips, in fancy, pressed
Against the brow once dewy with her breath,
Now lying numb, unknown, and uncaressed
Save by the dews of death.

II

What meed of tribute can the poet pay
The Soldier, but to trail the ivy-vine
Of idle rhyme above his grave today
In epitaph design?—

Or wreathe with laurel-words the icy brows
That ache no longer with a dream of fame,
But, pillowed lowly in the narrow house,
Renown'd beyond the name.

The dewy teardrops of the night may fall,
And tender morning with her shining hand
May brush them from the grasses green and tall
That undulate the land.—

Yet song of Peace nor din of toil and thrift,
Nor chanted honors, with the flowers we heap,
Can yield us hope the Hero's head to lift
Out of its dreamless sleep:

The dear old flag, whose faintest flutter flies
A stirring echo through each patriot breast,
Can never coax to life the folded eyes
That saw its wrongs redressed—

That watched it waver when the fight was hot,
And blazed with newer courage to its aid,
Regardless of the shower of shell and shot
Through which the charge was made;—

And when, at last, they saw it plume its wings,
Like some proud bird in stormy element,
And soar untrammeled on its wanderings,
They closed in death, content.

III

O mother, you who miss the smiling face
Of that dear boy who vanished from your sight,
And left you weeping o'er the vacant place
He used to fill at night,—

Who left you dazed, bewildered, on a day
That echoed wild huzzas, and roar of guns
That drowned the farewell words you tried to say
To incoherent ones;—

Be glad and proud you had the life to give—
Be comforted through all the years to come,—
Your country has a longer life to live,
Your son a better home.

O widow, weeping o'er the orphaned child,
Who only lifts his questioning eyes to send
A keener pang to grief unreconciled,—
Teach him to comprehend

He had a father brave enough to stand
Before the fire of Treason's blazing gun,
That, dying, he might will the rich old land
Of Freedom to his son.

And, maiden, living on through lonely years
In fealty to love's enduring ties,—
With strong faith gleaming through the tender tears
That gather in your eyes,

Look up! and own, in gratefulness of prayer,
Submission to the will of Heaven's High Host:—
I see your Angel-soldier pacing there,
Expectant at his post.—

I see the rank and file of armies vast,
That muster under one supreme control;
I hear the trumpet sound the signal-blast—
The calling of the roll—

The grand divisions falling into line
And forming, under voice of One alone
Who gives command, and joins with tone divine
The hymn that shakes the Throne.

IV

And thus, in tribute to the forms that rest
In their last camping-ground, we strew the bloom
And fragrance of the flowers they loved the best,
In silence o'er the tomb.

With reverent hands we twine the Hero's wreath
And clasp it tenderly on stake or stone
That stands the sentinel for each beneath
Whose glory is our own.

While in the violet that greets the sun,
We see the azure eye of some lost boy;
And in the rose the ruddy cheek of one
We kissed in childish joy,—

Recalling, haply, when he marched away,
He laughed his loudest though his eyes were wet.—
The kiss he gave his mother's brow that day
Is there and burning yet:

And through the storm of grief around her tossed,
One ray of saddest comfort she may see,—
Four hundred thousand sons like hers were lost
To weeping Liberty.

But draw aside the drapery of gloom,
And let the sunshine chase the clouds away
And gild with brighter glory every tomb
We decorate today:

And in the holy silence reigning round,
While prayers of perfume bless the atmosphere,
Where loyal souls of love and faith are found,
Thank God that Peace is here!

And let each angry impulse that may start,
Be smothered out of every loyal breast;
And, rocked within the cradle of the heart,
Let every sorrow rest.

UP AND DOWN OLD BRANDYWINE

UP and down old Brandywine,
In the days 'at's past and gone—
With a dad-burn hook-and-line
And a saplin'-pole—i swawn!
I've had more fun, to the square
Inch, than ever *any*where!
Heaven to come can't discount mine
Up and down old Brandywine!

Haint no sense in *wishin'*—yit
Wisht to goodness I *could* jes
"Gee" the blame world round and git
Back to that old happiness!—
Kindo' drive back in the shade
"The old Covered Bridge" there laid
'Crosst the crick, and sorto' soak
My soul over, hub and spoke!

Honest, now!—it haint no *dream*
'At I'm wantin',—but *the fac's*
As they wuz; the same old stream,
And the same old times, i jacks!—

Gim me back my bare feet—and
Stonebruise too!—And scratched and tanned!
And let hottest dog-days shine
Up and down old Brandywine!

In and on betwixt the trees
'Long the banks, pour down yer noon,
Kindo' curdled with the breeze
And the yallerhammer's tune;
And the smokin', chokin' dust
O' the turnpike at its wusst—
Saturd'ys, say, when it seems
Road's jes jammed with country teams!—

Whilse the old town, fur away
'Crosst the hazy pastur'-land,
Dozed-like in the heat o' day
Peaceful' as a hired hand.
Jolt the gravel th'ough the floor
O' the old bridge!—grind and roar
With yer blame percession-line—
Up and down old Brandywine!

Souse me and my new straw-hat
Off the foot-log!—what *I* care?—
Fist shoved in the crown o' that—
Like the old Clown ust to wear.

Wouldn't swop it fer a' old
Gin-u-wine raal crown o' gold!—
Keep her *King* ef you'll gim me
Jes the boy I ust to be!

Spill my fishin'-worms! er steal
My best "goggle-eye!"—but you
Can't lay hands on joys I feel
Nibblin' like they ust to do!
So, in memory, to-day
Same old ripple lips away
At my cork and saggin' line,
Up and down old Brandywine!

There the logs is, round the hill,
Where "Old Irvin" ust to lift
Out sunfish from daylight till
Dew-fall—'fore he'd leave "The Drift"
And give *us* a chance—and then
Kindo' fish back home again,
Ketchin' 'em jes left and right
Where *we* hadn't got "a bite!"

Er, 'way windin' out and in,—
Old path th'ough the iurnweeds
And dog-fennel to yer chin—
Then come suddent, th'ough the reeds

And cat-tails, smack into where
Them-air woods-hogs ust to scare
Us clean 'crosst the County-line,
Up and down old Brandywine!

But the dim roar o' the dam
It 'ud coax us furder still
Tords the old race, slow and ca'm,
Slidin' on to Huston's mill—
Where, I 'spect, "The Freeport crowd"
Never *warmed* to us er 'lowed
We wuz quite so overly
Welcome as we aimed to be.

Still it peared-like ever'thing—
Fur away from home as *there*—
Had more *relish*-like, i jing!—
Fish in stream, er bird in air!
O them rich old bottom-lands,
Past where Cowden's Schoolhouse stands!
Wortermelons—*master-mine!*
Up and down old Brandywine!

And sich pop-paws!—Lumps o' raw
Gold and green,—jes oozy th'ough
With ripe yaller—like you've saw
Custard-pie with no crust to:

And jes *gorges* o' wild plums,
Till a feller'd suck his thumbs
Clean up to his elbows! *My!—*
Me some more er lem me die!

Up and down old Brandywine!....
Stripe me with pokeberry-juice!—
Flick me with a pizenvine
And yell "*Yip!*" and lem me loose!
—Old now as I then wuz young,
'F I could sing as I *have* sung,
Song 'ud surely ring *dee-vine*
Up and down old Brandywine!

THREE SINGING FRIENDS

I

LEE O. HARRIS

SCHOOLMASTER and Songmaster! Memory
  Enshrines thee with an equal love, for thy
  Duality of gifts,—thy pure and high
Endowments—Learning rare, and Poesy.
These were as mutual handmaids, serving thee,
  Throughout all seasons of the years gone by,
  With all enduring joys 'twixt earth and sky—
In turn shared nobly with thy friends and me.
Thus is it that thy clear song, ringing on,
  Is endless inspiration, fresh and free
    As the old Mays at verge of June sunshine;
And musical as then, at dewy dawn,
  The robin hailed us, and all twinklingly
    Our one path wandered under wood and vine.

II

BENJ. S. PARKER

Thy rapt song makes of Earth a realm of light
  And shadow mystical as some dreamland
  Arched with unfathomed azure—vast and grand
With splendor of the morn; or dazzling bright

With orient noon; or strewn with stars of night
  Thick as the daisies blown in grasses fanned
  By odorous midsummer breezes and
Showered over by all bird-songs exquisite.
This is thy voice's beatific art—
  To make melodious all things below,
    Calling through them, from far, diviner space,
Thy clearer hail to us.—The faltering heart
  Thou cheerest; and thy fellow mortal so
    Fares onward under Heaven with lifted face.

III

JAMES NEWTON MATTHEWS

Bard of our Western world!—its prairies wide,
  With edging woods, lost creeks and hidden ways;
  Its isolated farms, with roundelays
Of orchard warblers heard on every side;
Its crossroad schoolhouse, wherein still abide
  Thy fondest memories,—since there thy gaze
  First fell on classic verse; and thou, in praise
Of that, didst find thine own song glorified.
So singing, smite the strings and counterchange
  The lucently melodious drippings of
    Thy happy harp, from airs of "Tempe Vale,"
To chirp and trill of lowliest flight and range,
  In praise of our Today and home and love—
    Thou meadowlark no less than nightingale.

A NOON LULL

'POSSUM in de 'tater-patch;
  Chicken-hawk a-hangin'
Stiddy 'bove de stable-lot,
  An' cyarpet-loom a-bangin'!
Hi! Mr. Hoppergrass, chawin' yo' terbacker,
Flick ye wid er buggy-whirp yer spit er little blacker!

Niggah in de roas'in'-yeers,
  Whiskers in de shuckin';
Weasel croppin' mighty shy,
  But ole hen a-cluckin'!
—What's got de matter er de mule-colt now?
Drapt in de turnip-hole, chasin' f'um de cow!

A WINDY DAY

THE dawn was a dawn of splendor,
And the blue of the morning skies
Was as placid and deep and tender
As the blue of a baby's eyes;
The sunshine flooded the mountain,
And flashed over land and sea
Like the spray of a glittering fountain.—
But the wind—the wind—Ah me!

Like a weird invisible spirit,
It swooped in its airy flight;
And the earth, as the stress drew near it,
Quailed as in mute affright;
The grass in the green fields quivered—
The waves of the smitten brook
Chillily shuddered and shivered,
And the reeds bowed down and shook.

Like a sorrowful miserere
It sobbed and it wailed and blew
Till the leaves on the trees looked weary,
And my prayers were weary, too;
And then, like the sunshine's glimmer
That failed in the awful strain,
All the hope of my eyes grew dimmer
In a spatter of spiteful rain.

MY HENRY

HE'S jes' a great, big, awk'ard, hulkin'
Feller,—humped, and sorto' sulkin'-
Like, and ruther still-appearin'—
Kind-as-ef he wuzn't keerin'
Whether school halt out er not—
That's my Henry, to a dot!

Allus kindo' liked him—whether
Childern, er growed-up together!
Fifteen year' ago and better,
'Fore he ever knowed a letter,
Run acrosst the little fool
In my Primer-class at school.

When the Teacher wuzn't lookin',
He'd be th'owin' wads; er crookin'
Pins; er sprinklin' pepper, more'n
Likely, on the stove; er borin'
Gimblet-holes up thue his desk—
Nothin' *that* boy wouldn't resk!

But, somehow, as I was goin'
On to say, he seemed so knowin',
Other ways, and cute and cunnin'—
Allus wuz a notion runnin'
Thue my giddy, fool-head he
Jes' had ben cut out fer me!

Don't go much on *prophesyin'*,
But last night whilse I wuz fryin'
Supper, with that man a-pitchin'
Little Marthy 'round the kitchen,
    Think-says-I, "Them baby's eyes
    Is my Henry's, jes' p'cise!"

THE SONG I NEVER SING

AS when in dreams we sometimes hear
A melody so faint and fine
And musically sweet and clear,
It flavors all the atmosphere
With harmony divine,—
So, often in my waking dreams,
I hear a melody that seems
Like fairy voices whispering
To me the song I never sing.

Sometimes when brooding o'er the years
My lavish youth has thrown away—
When all the glowing past appears
But as a mirage that my tears
Have crumbled to decay,—
I thrill to find the ache and pain
Of my remorse is stilled again,
As, forward bent and listening,
I hear the song I never sing.

A murmuring of rythmic words,
Adrift on tunes whose currents flow
Melodious with the trill of birds,
And far-off lowing of the herds
In lands of long-ago;

And every sound the truant loves
Comes to me like the coo of doves
When first in blooming fields of Spring
I heard the song I never sing.

The echoes of old voices, wound
In limpid streams of laughter where
The river Time runs bubble-crowned,
And giddy eddies ripple round
The lilies growing there;
Where roses, bending o'er the brink,
Drain their own kisses as they drink,
And ivies climb and twine and cling
About the song I never sing.

An ocean-surge of sound that falls
As though a tide of Heavenly art
Had tempested the gleaming halls
And crested o'er the golden walls
In showers on my heart....
Thus—thus, with open arms and eyes
Uplifted toward the alien skies,
Forgetting every earthly thing,
I hear the song I never sing.

O nameless lay, sing clear and strong,
Pour down thy melody divine
Till purifying floods of song
Have washed away the stains of wrong
That dim this soul of mine!
O woo me near and nearer thee,
Till my glad lips may catch the key,
And, with a voice unwavering,
Join in the song I never sing.

TO EDGAR WILSON NYE

O "WILLIAM,"—in thy blithe companionship
What liberty is mine—what sweet release
From clamorous strife, and yet what boisterous peace!
Ho! ho! it is thy fancy's finger-tip
That dints the dimple now, and kinks the lip
That scarce may sing, in all this glad increase
Of merriment! So, pray-thee, do not cease
To cheer me thus;—for, underneath the quip
Of thy droll sorcery, the wrangling fret
Of all distress is stilled—no syllable
Of sorrow vexeth me—no teardrops wet
My teeming lids save those that leap to tell
Thee thou 'st a guest that overweepeth, yet
Only because thou jokest overwell.

LITTLE DAVID

THE mother of the little boy that sleeps
Has blest assurance, even as she weeps:
She knows her little boy has now no pain—
No further ache, in body, heart or brain;
All sorrow is lulled for him—all distress
Passed into utter peace and restfulness.—
All health that heretofore has been denied—
All happiness, all hope, and all beside
Of childish longing, now he clasps and keeps
In voiceless joy—the little boy that sleeps.

OUT OF THE HITHERWHERE

OUT of the hitherwhere into the YON—
The land that the Lord's love rests upon;
Where one may rely on the friends he meets,
And the smiles that greet him along the streets:
Where the mother that left you years ago
Will lift the hands that were folded so,
And put them about you, with all the love
And tenderness you are dreaming of.

Out of the hitherwhere into the YON—
Where all of the friends of your youth have gone,—
Where the old schoolmate that laughed with you,
Will laugh again as he used to do,
Running to meet you, with such a face
As lights like a moon the wondrous place
Where God is living, and glad to live,
Since He is the Master and may forgive.

Out of the hitherwhere into the YON!—
Stay the hopes we are leaning on—
You, Divine, with Your merciful eyes
Looking down from the far-away skies,—
Smile upon us, and reach and take
Our worn souls Home for the old home's sake.—
And so Amen,—for our all seems gone
Out of the hitherwhere into the YON.

RABBIT IN THE CROSS-TIES

RABBIT in the cross-ties.—
  Punch him out—quick!
Git a twister on him
  With a long prong stick.
Watch him on the south side—
  Watch him on the—Hi!—
There he goes! Sic him, Tige!
  Yi! Yi!! Yi!!!

SERENADE—TO NORA

THE moonlight is failin'—
The sad stars are palin'—
The black wings av night are a-droopin' an' trailin';
The wind's miserere
Sounds lonesome an' dreary;
The katydid's dumb an' the nightingale's weary.

Troth, Nora! I'm wadin'
The grass an' paradin'
The dews at your dure, wid my swate serenadin',
Alone and forsaken,
Whilst you're never wakin'
To tell me you're wid me an' I am mistaken!

Don't think that my singin'
Its wrong to be flingin'
Forninst av the dreams that the Angels are bringin';
For if your pure spirit
Might waken and hear it,
You'd never be draamin' the Saints could come near it!

Then lave off your slaapin'—
The pulse av me's laapin'
To have the two eyes av yez down on me paapin'.
Och, Nora! Its hopin'
Your windy ye'll open
And light up the night were the heart av me's gropin'.

HE AND I

JUST drifting on together—
He and I—
As through the balmy weather
Of July
Drift two thistle-tufts imbedded
Each in each—by zephyrs wedded—
Touring upward, giddy-headed,
For the sky.

And, veering up and onward,
Do we seem
Forever drifting dawnward
In a dream,
Where we meet song-birds that know us,
And the winds their kisses blow us,
While the years flow far below us
Like a stream.

And we are happy—very—
He and I—
Aye, even glad and merry
Though on high
The heavens are sometimes shrouded
By the midnight storm, and clouded
Till the pallid moon is crowded
From the sky.

My spirit ne'er expresses
Any choice
But to clothe him with caresses
And rejoice;
And as he laughs, it is in
Such a tone the moonbeams glisten
And the stars come out to listen
To his voice.

And so, whate'er the weather,
He and I,—
With our lives linked thus together,
Float and fly
As two thistle-tufts imbedded
Each in each—by zephyrs wedded—
Touring upward, giddy-headed,
For the sky.

WHAT REDRESS

I PRAY you, do not use this thing
For vengeance; but if questioning
What wound, when dealt your humankind,
Goes deepest,—surely he will find
Who wrongs *you*, loving *him* no less—
There's nothing hurts like tenderness.

DREAMER, SAY

DREAMER, say, will you dream for me
A wild sweet dream of a foreign land,
Whose border sips of a foaming sea
With lips of coral and silver sand;
Where warm winds loll on the shady deeps,
Or lave themselves in the tearful mist
The great wild wave of the breaker weeps
O'er crags of opal and amethyst?

Dreamer, say, will you dream a dream
Of tropic shades in the lands of shine,
Where the lily leans o'er an amber stream
That flows like a rill of wasted wine,—
Where the palm-trees, lifting their shields of green,
Parry the shafts of the Indian sun
Whose splintering vengeance falls between
The reeds below where the waters run?

Dreamer, say, will you dream of love
That lives in a land of sweet perfume,
Where the stars drip down from the skies above
In molten spatters of bud and bloom?
Where never the weary eyes are wet,
And never a sob in the balmy air,
And only the laugh of the paroquette
Breaks the sleep of the silence there?

WHEN LIDE MARRIED *HIM*

WHEN Lide married *him*—w'y, she had to jes dee-fy
The whole popilation!—But she never bat' an eye!
Her parents begged, and *threatened*—she must give him up—that *he*
Wuz jes "a common drunkard!"—And he *wuz*, appearantly.—
Swore they'd chase him off the place
Ef he ever showed his face—
Long after she'd *eloped* with him and *married* him fer shore!—
When Lide married *him*, it wuz "*Katy, bar the door!*"

When Lide married *him*—Well! she had to go and be
A *hired girl* in town somewheres—while he tromped round to see
What *he* could git that *he* could do,—you might say, jes sawed wood
From door-to-door!—that's what he done—'cause that wuz best he could!
And the strangest thing, i jing!
Wuz, he didn't *drink* a thing,—
But jes got down to bizness, like he someway *wanted* to,
When Lide married him, like they warned her *not* to do!

When Lide married *him*—er, ruther, *had* ben married
A little up'ards of a year—some feller come and carried
That *hired girl* away with him—a ruther *stylish* feller
In a bran-new green spring-wagon, with the wheels striped red and yeller:
And he whispered, as they driv
Tords the country, "*Now we'll live!*"—
And *somepin' else* she *laughed* to hear, though both her eyes wuz dim,
'Bout "*trustin' Love and Heav'n above,* sence Lide married *him!*"

MY BRIDE THAT IS TO BE

O SOUL of mine, look out and see
My bride, my bride that is to be!—
  Reach out with mad, impatient hands,
And draw aside futurity
As one might draw a veil aside—
  And so unveil her where she stands
Madonna-like and glorified—
  The queen of undiscovered lands
Of love, to where she beckons me—
My bride—my bride that is to be.
The shadow of a willow-tree
  That wavers on a garden-wall
  In summertime may never fall
In attitude as gracefully
As my fair bride that is to be;—
  Nor ever Autumn's leaves of brown
As lightly flutter to the lawn
As fall her fairy-feet upon
  The path of love she loiters down.—
O'er drops of dew she walks, and yet
Not one may stain her sandal wet—
Aye, she might *dance* upon the way
Nor crush a single drop to spray,
So airy-like she seems to me,—
My bride, my bride that is to be.

I know not if her eyes are light
As summer-skies or dark as night,—
I only know that they are dim
  With mystery: In vain I peer
  To make their hidden meaning clear,
  While o'er their surface, like a tear
That ripples to the silken brim,
A look of longing seems to swim
  All worn and wearylike to me;
And then, as suddenly, my sight
Is blinded with a smile so bright,
  Through folded lids I still may see
  My bride, my bride that is to be.
Her face is like a night of June
Upon whose brow the crescent-moon
Hangs pendant in a diadem
Of stars, with envy lighting them.—
  And, like a wild cascade, her hair
Floods neck and shoulder, arm and wrist,
Till only through a gleaming mist
  I seem to see a siren there,
With lips of love and melody
  And open arms and heaving breast
  Wherein I fling myself to rest,
The while my heart cries hopelessly
For my fair bride that is to be....

Nay, foolish heart and blinded eyes!
My bride hath need of no disguise.—
  But, rather, let her come to me
In such a form as bent above
  My pillow when, in infancy,
I knew not anything but love.—
O let her come from out the lands
  Of Womanhood—not fairy isles,—
And let her come with Woman's hands
  And Woman's eyes of tears and smiles,—
With Woman's hopefulness and grace
Of patience lighting up her face:
And let her diadem be wrought
Of kindly deed and prayerful thought,
That ever over all distress
May beam the light of cheerfulness.—
And let her feet be brave to fare
The labyrinths of doubt and care,
That, following, my own may find
The path to Heaven God designed.—
O let her come like this to me—
My bride—my bride that is to be.

"RINGWORM FRANK"

JEST Frank Reed 's his *real* name—though
Boys all calls him "Ringworm Frank,"
'Cause he allus *runs round* so.—
No man can't tell where to bank
Frank 'll be,
Next you see
Er *hear* of him!—Drat his melts!—
That man's allus *somers else!*

We're old pards.—But Frank he jest
Can't stay still!—Wuz *prosper'n'* here,
But lit out on furder West
Somers on a ranch, last year:
Never heard
Nary a word
How he liked it, tel to-day,
Got this card, reads thisaway:—

"Dad-burn climate out here makes
Me homesick all Winter long,
And when Springtime *comes*, it takes
Two pee-wees to sing one song,—
One sings '*pee*,'
And the other one '*wee!*'
Stay right where you air, old pard.—
Wisht *I* wuz this postal-card!"

AN EMPTY GLOVE

I

AN empty glove—long withering in the grasp
Of Time's cold palm. I lift it to my lips—
And lo, once more I thrill beneath its clasp,
In fancy, as with odorous finger-tips
It reaches from the years that used to be
And proffers back love, life and all, to me.

II

Ah! beautiful she was beyond belief:
Her face was fair and lustrous as the moon's;
Her eyes—too large for small delight or grief,—
The smiles of them were Laughter's afternoons:
Their tears were April showers, and their love—
All sweetest speech swoons ere it speaks thereof.

III

White-fruited cocoa shown against the shell
Were not so white as was her brow below
The cloven tresses of the hair that fell
Across her neck and shoulders of nude snow;
Her cheeks—chaste pallor, with a crimson stain—
Her mouth was like a red rose rinsed with rain.

IV

And this was she my fancy held as good—
As fair and lovable—in every wise
As peerless in pure worth of womanhood
As was her wondrous beauty in men's eyes.—
Yet, all alone, I kiss this empty glove—
The poor husk of the hand I loved—and love.

OUR OWN

THEY walk here with us, hand-in-hand;
We gossip, knee-by-knee;
They tell us all that they have planned—
Of all their joys to be,—
And, laughing, leave us: And, to-day,
All desolate we cry
Across wide waves of voiceless graves—
Good-bye! Good-bye! Good-bye!

MAKE-BELIEVE AND CHILD-PLAY

THE FROG

WHO am I but the Frog—the Frog!
My realm is the dark bayou,
And my throne is the muddy and moss-grown log
That the poison-vine clings to—
And the blacksnakes slide in the slimy tide
Where the ghost of the moon looks blue.

What am I but a King—a King!—
For the royal robes I wear—
A sceptre, too, and a signet-ring,
As vassals and serfs declare:
And a voice, god wot, that is equaled not
In the wide world anywhere!

I can talk to the Night—the Night!—
Under her big black wing
She tells me the tale of the world outright,
And the secret of everything;
For she knows you all, from the time you crawl,
To the doom that death will bring.

The Storm swoops down, and he blows—and blows,—
While I drum on his swollen cheek,
And croak in his angered eye that glows

With the lurid lightning's streak;
While the rushes drown in the watery frown
That his bursting passions leak.

And I can see through the sky—the sky—
As clear as a piece of glass;
And I can tell you the how and why
Of the things that come to pass—
And whether the dead are there instead,
Or under the graveyard grass.

To your Sovereign lord all hail—all hail!—
To your Prince on his throne so grim!
Let the moon swing low, and the high stars trail
Their heads in the dust to him;
And the wide world sung: Long live the King,
And grace to his royal whim!

"TWIGGS AND TUDENS"

IF my old school-chum and room-mate John Skinner is alive to-day—and no doubt he *is* alive, and quite so, being, when last heard from, the very alert and effective Train Dispatcher at Butler, Ind.,—he will not have forgotten a certain night in early June (the 8th) of 1870, in "Old Number 'Leven" of the Dunbar House, Greenfield, when he and I sat the long night through, getting ready a famous issue of our old school-paper, "*The Criterion.*" And he will remember, too, the queer old man who occupied, but that one night, the room just opposite our own, number 13. For reasons wholly aside from any superstitious dread connected with the numerals, 13 was not a desirable room; its locality was alien to all accommodations, and its comforts, like its furnishings, were extremely meager. In fact, it was the room usually assigned to the tramp-printer, who, in those days, was an institution; or again, it was the local habitation of the oft-recurring transient customer who was too incapacitated to select a room himself when he retired—or rather, when he was personally retired by "the hostler," as the gentlemanly night-clerk of that era was habitually designated.

As both Skinner and myself—between fitful terms of school—had respectively served as "printer's devil" in

the two rival newspaper offices of the town, it was natural for us to find a ready interest in anything pertaining to the newspaper business; and so it was, perhaps, that we had been selected, by our own approval and that of our fellow-students of The Graded Schools, to fill the rather exalted office of editing "*The Criterion.*" Certain it is, that the rather abrupt rise from the lowly duties of the "roller" to the editorial management of a paper of our own (even if issued in hand-writing) we accepted as a natural right; and, vested in our new power of office, we were largely "shaping the whisper of the throne" about our way.

And upon this particular evening it was, as John and I had fairly squared ourselves for the work of the night, that we heard the clatter and shuffle of feet on the side-stairs, and, an instant later, the hostler establishing some poor unfortunate in 13, just across the hall.

"Listen!" said John, as we heard an old man's voice through the open transom of our door,—"Listen at that!"

It was an utterance peculiarly refined, in language as well as intonation. A low, mild, rather apologetic voice, gently assuring the hostler that "everything was very snug and comfortable indeed," so far as the "compartment" was concerned—but would not the "attendant" kindly supply a better light, together with pen-and-ink—and just a sheet or two of paper,—if he would be so

very good as to find a pardon for so very troublesome a guest."

"Haint no writin'-paper," said the hostler, briefly,—"and the big lamps is all in use. These fellers here in 'Leven might let you have some paper and—Haint *you* got a lead-pencil?"

"Oh, no matter!" came the impatient yet kindly answer of the old voice—"no matter at all, my good fellow!—Good-night—good-night!"

We waited till the sullen, clumpy footsteps down the hall and stair had died away.

Then Skinner, with a handful of foolscap, opened our door; and, with an indorsing smile from me, crossed the hall and tapped at 13—was admitted—entered, and very quietly closed the door behind him, evidently that I might not be disturbed.

I wrote on in silence for quite a time. It was, in fact, a full half-hour before John had returned,—and with a face and eye absolutely blazing with delight.

"An old printer," whispered John, answering my look,—"and we're in luck:—He's a *genius*, 'y God! and an Englishman, and knows Dickens *personally*—used to write races with him, and's got a manuscript of his in his "portmanteau," as he calls an old oil-cloth knapsack with one lung clean gone. Excuse this extra light.—Old man's lamp's like a sore eye, and he's going to touch up the Dickens' sketch for *us! Hear?*—

For us—for '*The Criterion.*' Says he can't sleep—he's in distress—has a presentiment—some dear friend is dying—or dead now—and he must write—*write!*"

This is, in briefest outline, the curious history of the subjoined sketch, especially curious for the reason that the following morning's cablegram announced that the great novelist, Charles Dickens, had been stricken suddenly and seriously the night previous. On the day of this announcement—even as "*The Criterion*" was being read to perfunctorily-interested visitors of The Greenfield Graded Schools—came the further announcement of Mr. Dickens' death. The old printer's manuscript, here reproduced, is, as originally, captioned—

TWIGGS AND TUDENS

"Now who'd want a more cozier little home than me and Tude's got here?" asked Mr. Twiggs, as his twinkling eyes swept caressingly around the cheery little room in which he, alone, stood one chill December evening as the great St. Paul's was drawling six.

"This aint no princely hall with all its gorgeous paraphanaly, as the play-bills says; but it's what I calls a 'interior,' which for meller comfort and cheerful surroundin's, aint to be ekalled by no other 'flat' on the boundless, never-endin' stage of this existence!" And as the exuberant Mr. Twiggs rendered this observation, he felt called upon to smile and bow most graciously to

an invisible audience, whose wild approval he in turn interpreted by an enthusiastic clapping of his hands and the cry of "ongcore!" in a dozen different keys—this strange acclamation being made the more grotesque by a great green parrot perched upon the mantel, which in a voice less musical than penetrating, chimed in with "Hooray for Twiggs and Tudens!" a very great number of times.

"Tude's a queer girl," said Mr. Twiggs, subsiding into a reflective calm, broken only by the puffing of his pipe, and the occasional articulation of a thought, as it loitered through his mind. "Tude's a queer girl!—a werry queer girl!" repeated Mr. Twiggs, pausing again, with a long whiff at his pipe, and marking the graceful swoop the smoke made as it dipped and disappeared up the wide, black-throated chimney; and then, as though dropping into confidence with the great fat kettle on the coals, that steamed and bubbled with some inner paroxysm, he added, "And queer and nothink short, is the lines for Tude, eh?

"Now s'posin'," he continued, leaning forward and speaking in a tone whose careful intonation might have suggested a more than ordinary depth of wisdom and sagacity,—"S'posin' a pore chap like me, as aint no property only this 'ere 'little crooked house', as Tude calls it, and some o' the properties I 'andles at the Drury—as I was a-sayin',—s'posin' now a old rough chap like

me was jest to tell her all about herself, and who she is and all, and not no kith or kin o' mine, let alone a daughter, as *she* thinks—What do you reckon now 'ud be the upshot, eh?" And as Mr. Twiggs propounded this mysterious query he jabbed the poker prankishly in the short-ribs of the grate, at which the pot, as though humoring a joke it failed to wholly comprehend, set up a chuckling of such asthmatic violence its smothered cachinations tilted its copper lid till Mr. Twiggs was obliged to dash a cup of water in its face.

"And Tude's a-comin of a age, too," continued Mr. Twiggs, "when a more tenderer pertecter than a father, so to speak, wouldn't be out o' keepin' with the nat'ral order o' things, seein' as how she's sort o' startin' for herself-like now. And its a question in my mind, if it ain't my bounden duty as her father—or ruther, who has been a father to her all her life—to kind o' tell her jest how things is, and all—and how *I* am, and everythink,—and how I feel as though I ort o' stand by her, as I allus have, and allus *have* had her welfare in view, and kind o' feel as how I allus—ort o' kind o'—ort o' kind o'"—and here Mr. Twiggs' voice fell into silence so abruptly that the drowsy parrot started from its trance-like quiet and cried "Ortokindo! ortokindo!" with such a strength of seeming mockery that he was brushed violently to the floor by the angry hand of Mr. Twiggs and went backing awkwardly beneath the table.

"Blow me," said Mr. Twiggs, "if the knowin' impidence of that 'ere bird aint astonishin'!" And then, after a serious controversy with the draft of his pipe, he went on with his deliberations.

"Lor! it were jest scrumptious to see Tude in 'The Iron Chest' last night! Now, I aint no actur myself,—I've been on, of course, a thousand times as 'fillin',' 'sogers' and 'peasants' and the like, where I never had no lines, on'y in the 'choruses;' but if I don't know nothin' but 'All hail!—All hail!' I've had the experience of bein' under the baleful hinfluence of the hoppery-glass, and I'm free to say it air a ticklish position and no mistake. But *Tude!* w'y, bless you, she warn't the first bit flustered, was she? 'Peared like she jest felt perfectly at home-like—like her mother afore her! And I'm dashed if I didn't feel the cold chills a-creepin' and a-crawlin' when she was a-singin' 'Down by the river there grows a green willer and a-weepin' all night with the bank for her piller;' and when she come to the part about wantin' to be buried there 'while the winds was a-blowin' close by the stream where her tears was a-flowin', and over her corpse to keep the green willers growin', I'm d—d if I didn't blubber right out!" And as the highly sympathetic Mr. Twiggs delivered this acknowledgment, he stroked the inner corners of his eyes, and rubbed his thumb and finger on his trowsers.

"It were a tryin' thing, though," he went on, his

mellow features settling into a look not at all in keeping with his shiny complexion, "it were a tryin' thing, and it *air* a tryin' thing to see them lovely arms o' hern a-twinin' so lovin'-like around that 'ere Stanley's neck and a-kissin' of him—as she's obleeged to do, of course—as the 'properties' of the play demands; but I'm blowed if she wouldn't do it quite so nat'ral-like I'd feel easier. Blow me!" he broke off savagely, starting up and flinging his pipe in the ashes, "I'm about a-comin' to the conclusion I aint got no more courage'n a blasted schoolboy! Here I am old enough to be her father—mighty nigh it—and yet I'm actually afear'd to speak up and tell her jest how things is, and all, and how I feel like I—like I—ort o'—ort o'"—

"*Ortokindo! Ortokindo!*" shrieked the parrot, clinging in a reversed position to the under-round of a chair.—"Ortokindo! Ortokindo! Tude's come home!—Tude's come home!" And as though in happy proof of this latter assertion, the gentle Mr. Twiggs found his chubby neck encircled by a pair of rosy arms, and felt upon his cheek the sudden pressure of a pair of lips that thrilled his old heart to the core. And then the noisy bird dropped from his perch and marched pompously from its place of concealment, trailing its rusty wings and shrieking, "Tude's come home!" at the top of its brazen voice.

"Shet up!" screamed Mr. Twiggs, with a pretended

gust of rage, kicking lamely at the feathered oracle; "I'll 'Tude's-come-home' ye! W'y, a feller can't hear his *ears* for your infernal squawkin'!" And then, turning toward the serious eyes that peered rebukingly into his own, his voice fell gentle as a woman's: "Well, there, Tudens, I beg parding; I do indeed. Don't look at me thataway. I know I'm a great, rough, good-for—" But a warm, swift kiss cut short the utterance; and, as the girl drew back, still holding the bright old face between her tender palms, he said simply, "You're a queer girl, Tudens; a queer girl."

"Ha! am I?" said the girl, in quite evident heroics and quotation, starting back with a theatrical flourish and falling into a fantastic attitude.—"'Troth, I am sorry for it; me poor father's heart is bursting with gratichude, and he would fain ease it by pouring out his thanks to his benefactor.'"

"Werry good! Werry good, indeed!" said Mr. Twiggs, gazing wistfully upon the graceful figure of the girl. "You're a-growin' more wonderful' clever in your 'presence' every day, Tude. You don't think o' nothink else but your actin,' do ye now?" And, as Mr. Twiggs concluded this observation, a something very like a sigh came faltering from his lips.

"Why, listen there! Ah-ha!" laughed Tude, clapping her hands and dancing gaily around his chair.—"Why, you old melancholy Dane, you! are you actually *sighing?*" Then, dropping into a tragic air of deep con-

trition, she continued: "'But, believe me, I would not question you, but to console you, Wilford. I would scorn to pry into any one's grief, much more yours, Wilford, to satisfy a busy curiosity.'"

"Oh, don't Tude; don't *rehearse* like that at me!—I can't a-bear it." And the serious Mr. Twiggs held out his hand as though warding off a blow. At this appeal the girl's demeanor changed to one of tenderest solicitude.

"Why, Pop'm," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, "I did not mean to vex you—forgive me. I was only trying to be happy, as I ought, although my own heart is this very minute heavy—very heavy—very.—No, no; I don't mean that—but, Father, Father, I have not been dutiful."

"W'y, yes you have," broke in Mr. Twiggs, smothering the heavy exclamation in his handkerchief. "You ain't been ondutiful, nor nothink else. You're jest all and everythink that heart could wish. It's all my own fault, Tudens; it's all my fault. You see, I git to thinkin' sometimes like I was a-goin' to lose you; and now that you are a-comin' on in years, and gittin' such a fine start, and all, and position and everythink.—Yes sir! *position*, 'cause everybody likes you, Tudens. You know that; and I'm that proud of you and all, and that selfish, that it's onpossible I could ever, ever give you up;—never, never, *ever* give you up!" And Mr. Twiggs

again stifled his voice in his handkerchief and blew his nose with prolonged violence.

It may have been the melancholy ticking of the clock, as it grated on the silence following, it may have been the gathering darkness of the room, or the plaintive sighing of the rising wind without, that caused the girl to shudder as she stooped to kiss the kind old face bent forward in the shadows, and turned with feigned gayety to the simple task of arranging supper. But when, a few minutes later, she announced that Twiggs and Tudens' tea was waiting, the two smilingly sat down, Mr. Twiggs remarking, that if he only knew a blessing, he'd ask it upon that occasion most certainly.

"—For only look at these-'ere 'am and eggs," he said, admiringly: "I'd like to know if the Queen herself could cook 'em to a nicer turn, or serve 'em up more tantalizin'er to the palate. And this-'ere soup,—or whatever it is, is rich as gravy; and these boughten rolls ain't a bad thing either, split in two and toasted as you do 'em, air they, Tude?" And as Mr. Twiggs glanced inquiringly at his companion, he found her staring vacantly at her plate. "I was jest a-sayin', Tudens—" he went on, pretending to blow his tea and glancing cautiously across his saucer.

"Yes, Pop'm, I heard you;—we really *ought* to have a blessing, by all means."

Mr. Twiggs put down his tea without tasting it.

"Tudens," he said, after a long pause, in which he carefully buttered a piece of toast for the second time,—"Tudens, I'm 'most afeared you didn't grasp that last remark of mine: I was a-sayin'—"

"Well—"said Tudens, attentively.

"I was a-sayin'," said Mr. Twiggs, averting his face and staring stoically at his toast; "I was a-sayin' that you was a-gittin' now to be quite a young woman."

"Oh, so you were," said Tudens, with charming naivete.

"Well," said Mr. Twiggs, repentantly, but with a humorous twinkle, "if I wasn't a-sayin' of it, I was *a-thinkin'* it."—And then, running along hurriedly, "and I've been a-thinkin' it for days and days—ever sence you left the 'balley' and went in 'chambermaids,' and last in leadin' roles. Maybe *you* ain't noticed it, but I've had my eyes on you from the 'flies' and the 'wings;' and jest betwixt us, Tudens, and not for me as ort to know better, and does know better, to go a-flatterin', at my time o'—or to go a-flatterin' anybody, as I said, after you're a-gittin' to be a young woman—and what's more, a werry '*andsome* young woman!"

"*Why, Pop'm!*" exclaimed Tudens, blushing.

"Yes you are, Tudens, and I mean it, every word of it; and as I was a-goin' on to say, I've been a-watchin' of you, and a-layin' off a long time jest to tell you summat that will make your eyes open wider 'an that! What

I mean," said Mr. Twiggs, coughing vehemently and pushing his chair back from the table, "what I mean is, you'll soon be old enough to be a-settin' up for yourself-like, and marry'—W'y, Tudens, what *ails* you?" The girl had risen to her feet, and, with a face dead white and lips all tremulous, stood clinging to her chair for support. "What ails you, Tudens?" repeated Mr. Twiggs, lifting to his feet and gazing on her with a curious expression of alarm and tenderness.

"Nothing serious, dear Pop'm," said Tudens, with a flighty little laugh,—"only it just flashed on me all at once that I'd clear forgotten poor 'Dick's' supper." And as she turned abruptly to the parrot, cooing and clucking to him playfully,—up, up from some hitherto undreamed-of depth within the yearning heart of Mr. Twiggs mutely welled the old utterance, "Tude's a queer girl!"

"Whatever made you think of such a thing, Father?" called Tudens, gaily; and then, without waiting for an answer, went on cooing to the parrot,—"Hey, old Dickey-bird! do *you* think Tudens is a handsome young woman? and do *you* think Tudens is old enough to marry, eh?" This query delivered, she broke into a fit of merriment which so wrought upon the susceptibilities of the bird that he was heard to repeatedly declare and affirm, in most positive and unequivocal terms, that Tude had actually come home.

"Yes—*sir*, Tudens!" broke in Mr. Twiggs at last,

lighting a fresh churchwarden and settling into his old position at the grate; "have your laugh out over it now, but it's a werry serious fact, for all that."

"I know it, Father," said the girl, recovering her gravity, turning her large eyes lovingly upon him and speaking very tenderly. "I know it—oh, I know it; and many, many times when I have thought of it, and then again of your old kindly faith; all the warm wealth of your love; and our old home here, and all the happiness it ever held for me and you alike—oh, I have tried hard—indeed, indeed I have—to put all other thought away and live for you alone! But Pop'm! dear old Pop'm—" And even as the great strong breast made shelter for her own, the woman's heart within her flowed away in mists of gracious tears.

"Couldn't live without old Pop'm, could her?" half cried and laughed the happy Mr. Twiggs, tangling his clumsy fingers in the long dark hair that fell across his arm, and bending till his glad face touched her own.—"—Couldn't live without old Pop'm?"

"Never! never!" sobbed the girl, lifting her brimming eyes and gazing in the kind old face. "Oh, may I always live with you, Pop'm? Always?—Forever?"—

"—And a day!" said Mr. Twiggs, emphatically.

"Even after I'm—" and she hid her face again.

"Even after—*what*, Tudens?"

"After I'm—after I'm—married?" murmured Tudens, with a longing pressure.

"Nothink short!" said Mr. Twiggs;—"perwidin'," he added, releasing one hand and smoothing back his scanty hair—"perwidin', of course, that your man is a honest, straitforrerd feller, as aint no lordly notions nor nothink o' that sort."

"Nor rich?"

"Well, I aint so p'ticklar about his bein' *pore*, adzackly.—Say a feller as works for his livin', and knows how to 'usband his earnin's thrifty-like, and allus 'as a hextry crown or two laid up against a rainy day—and a good perwider, of course," said Mr. Twiggs, with a comfortable glance around the room.—"'ll blow me if I didn't see a face there a-peerin' in the winder!"

"Oh, no you didn't," said the girl, without raising her head. "Go on—'and a good provider—'"

"—A good perwider," continued Mr. Twiggs; "and a feller, of course, as has a eye out for the substantials of this life, and aint afeard o' work—that's the idear! that's the idear!" said Mr. Twiggs by way of sweeping conclusion.

"And that's all old Pop'm asks, after all?" queried the girl, with her radiant face yearning in his own.

"W'y, certainly!" said Mr. Twiggs, with heartiness. "Aint that all and everythink to make home happy?—"

catching her face between his great brown hands and kissing her triumphantly.

"Hooray for Twiggs-and Twiggs-and Twiggs-and—" cootered the drowsy bird, disjointedly.

The girl had risen.—"And you'll forgive me for marrying such a man?"

"Won't I?" said Mr. Twiggs, with a rapturous twinkle.

As he spoke, she flung her arms about his neck and pressed her lips close, close against his cheek, her own glad face now fronting the little window. She heard the clicking of the latch, the opening of the door, and the step of the intruder ere she loosed her hold.

"God bless you, Pop'm, and forgive me!—This is my husband." The new comer, Mr. Stanley, reached and grasped the hand of Mr. Twiggs, eagerly, fervidly, albeit the face he looked on then will haunt him to the hour of his death.—Yet haply, some day, when the Master takes the self-same hand within his own and whispers "Tude's come home," the old smile will return.

AN IDYL OF THE KING

Erewhile, as Autumn, to King Arthur's court
Came Raelus, clamouring: "Lo, has our house
Been sacked and pillaged by a lawless band
Of robber knaves, led on by Alstanés,
The Night-Flower named, because of her fair face,
All like a lily gleaming in the dusk
Of her dark hair—and like a lily brimmed
With dewy eyes that drip their limpid smiles
Like poison out, for by them has been wro't
My elder brother's doom, as much I fear.
While three days gone was holden harvest-feast
At Lynion castle—clinging like a gull
High up the gray cliffs of Caerleon—
Came, leaf-like lifted from the plain below
As by a twisted wind, a rustling pack
Of bandit pillagers, with Alstanés
Bright-fluttering like a red leaf in the front.
And ere we were aware of fell intent—
Not knowing whether it was friend or foe—
We found us in their toils, and all the house
In place of guests held only prisoners—
Save that the host, my brother, wro't upon
By the strange beauty of the robber queen,

Was left unfettered, but by silken threads
Of fine-spun flatteries and wanton smiles
Of the enchantress, till her villain thieves
Had rifled as they willed and signal given
To get to horse again. And so they went—
Their leader flinging backward, as she rode,
A kiss to my mad brother—mad since then,—
For from that sorry hour he but talked
Of Alstanés, and her rare beauty, and
Her purity—aye, even that he said
Was star-white, and should light his life with love
Or leave him groping blindly in its quest
Thro' all eternity. So, sighing, he
Went wandering about till set of sun,
Then got to horse, and bade us all farewell;
And with his glamoured eyes bent trancedly
Upon the tumbled sands that marked the way
The robber-woman went, he turned and chased
His long black shadow o'er the edge of night."

—So Raelus, all seemingly befret
With such concern as nipped his utterance
In scraps of speech: at which Sir Lancelot,
Lifting a slow smile to the King, and then
Turning his cool eye on the youth—"And you
Would track this siren-robber to her hold
And rout her rascal followers, and free

Your brother from the meshes of this queen
Of hearts—for there you doubtless think him?"
"Ay!"
Foamed Raelus, cheek flushed and eye aflame,—
"So even have I tracked, and found them, too,
And know their burrow, shrouded in a copse,
Where, faring in my brother's quest, I heard
The nicker of his horse, and followed on
And found him tethered in a thicket wild,
As tangled in its tress of leaf and limb
As is a madman's hair; and down the path
That parted it and ran across a knoll
And dipped again, all suddenly I came
Upon a cave, wide-yawning 'neath a beard
Of tangled moss and vine, whence issuing
I heard, blown o'er my senses faint and clear
As whiffs of summer wind, my brother's voice
Lilting a love-song, with the burden tricked
With dainty warblings of a woman's tongue:
And even as I listening bent, I heard
Such peals of wanton merriment as made
My own heart flutter as a bird that beats
For freedom at the bars that prison it.
So turned I then, and fled as one who flies
To save himself alone—forgetful all
Of that my dearer self—my brother.—O!"—
Breaking as sharply as the icy blade

That loosens from the eave to slice the air
And splinter into scales of flying frost—
"Thy help! Thy help! A dozen goodly knights—
Aye, even that, if so it be their hearts
Are hungry as my own to right the wrong!"

So Raelus. And Arthur graciously
Gave ear to him, and, patient, heard him thro',
And pitied him, and granted all he asked:
Then took his hand and held it, saying, "Strong,
And ever stronger may its grasp be knit
About the sword that flashes in the cause
Of good."

Thus Raelus, on the morrow's front,
Trapped like a knight and shining like a star,
Pranced from the archway of the court, and led
His glittering lances down the gleaming road
That river-like ran winding till it slipped
Out of the palace view and spilled their shields
Like twinkling bubbles o'er the mountain brim.

Then happed it that as Raelus rode, his tongue
Kept even pace and cantered ever on
Right merrily. His brother, as he said,
Had such an idle soul within his breast—
Such shallowness of fancy for his heart
To drift about in—that he well believed
Its anchor would lay hold on any smile

The lees of womanhood might offer him.
As for himself, he loved his brother well,
Yet had far liefer see him stark and white
In marble death than that his veins should burn
With such vitality as spent its flame
So garishly it knew no steady blaze,
But ever wavered round as veered the wind
Of his conceit; for he had made his boast—
Tho' to his own shame did he speak of it—
That with a wink he could buy every smile
That virtue owned. So tattled Raelus
Till, heated with his theme, he lifted voice
And sang the song, "The Light of Woman's Eyes!"

"O bright is gleaming morn on mountain hight;
And bright the moon, slipt from its sheath of night,—
But brighter is the light of woman's eyes.

"And bright the dewdrop, trembling on the lip
Of some red rose, or lily petal-tip,
Or lash of pink,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright is the firefly's ever drifting spark
That throbs its pulse of light out in the dark;
And bright the stars,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright morn or even; bright or moon or star,
And all the many twinkling lights that are,—
O brighter than ye all are woman's eyes."

So Raelus sang.—And they who rode with him
Bewildered were, and even as he sang
Went straggling, twos and threes, and fell behind
To whisper wonderingly, "Is he a fool?"
And "Does he waver in his mind?" and "Does
The newness of adventure dazzle him?"
So spake they each to each, till far beyond,
With but one lothful knight in company,
They saw him quit the beaten track, and turn
Into the grassy margin of a wood.
And loitering, they fell in mocking jest
Of their strange leader! "See! why, see!" said one,—
"He needs no help to fight his hornets' nest,
But one brave knight to squire him!"—pointing on
To where fared on the two and disappeared.
"O ay!" said one, "belike he is some old
War-battered knight of long-forgotten age,
That, bursting from his chrysalis, the grave,
Comes back to show us tricks we never dreamed!"
"Or haply," said another, with a laugh,—
"He rides ahead to tell them that he comes,
And shrive them ere his courage catches up."
And merry made they all, and each in turn

Fillipped a witty pellet at his head:
Until, at last, their shadows shrunk away
And shortened 'neath them and the hour was noon,
They flung them from their horses listlessly
Within the grassy margin of the wood
Where had passed Raelus an hour agone:
And, hungered, spied a rustic; and they sent
To have them such refreshment as might be
Found at the nearest farm,—where, as it chanced,
Was had most wholesome meat, and milk, and bread;
And honey, too, celled in its fretted vase
Of gummy gold, and dripping nectar-sweet
As dreamed-of kisses from the lips of love;
Wine, too, was broughten, rosy as the dawn
That ushers in the morning of the heart;
And tawny, mellow pear, whose golden ore
Fell molten on the tongue and oozed away
In creamy and delicious nothingness;
And netted melon, musky as the breath
Of breezes blown from out the Orient;
And purple clusterings of plum and grape,
Blurred with a dust dissolving at the touch
Like flakes the fairies had snowed over them.
And as the idlers basked, with toast and song
And graceful dalliance and wanton jest,
A sound of trampling hooves and jingling reins
Brake sudden, stilled them; and from out a dim

Path leading from the bosky wood there came
A troop of mounted damsels, nigh a score,
Led by a queenly girl, in crimson clad,
With lissome figure lithe and willowy,
And face as fair and sweet and pure withal
As might a maiden lily-blossom be
Ere it has learned the sin of perfect bloom:
Her hair, blown backward like a silken scarf
And fondled by the sun, was glossier
And bluer black than any raven's wing.
"And O!" she laughed, not knowing she was heard
By any but her fellows: "Men are fools!"
Then drawing rein, and wheeling suddenly,
Her charger mincing backward,—"Raelus—
My Raelus is greater than ye all,
Since he is such a fool that he forgets
He is a man, and lets his tongue of love
Run babbling like a silly child's; and, pah!
I puff him to the winds like thistle-down!"
And, wheeling as she spake, found staring up,
Wide-eyed and wondering, a group of knights,
Half lifted, as their elbows propped their heads,
Half lying; and one, smirker than the rest,
Stood bowing very low, with upturned eyes
Lit with a twinkling smile: "Fair lady—and
Most gracious gentlewomen"—seeing that
The others drew them back as tho' abashed

And veiled their faces with all modesty,
Tho' she, their leader, showed not any qualm,—
"Since all unwittingly we overheard
Your latest speech, and since we know at last
'All men are fools,' right glad indeed am I
That such a nest of us remains for you
To vanquish with those eyes." Then, serious,
That she nor smiled nor winced, nor anything—
"Your pardon will be to me as a shower
Of gracious rain unto a panting drouth."
So bowed in humblest reverence; at which
The damsel, turning to her followers,
Laughed musically,—"See! he proves my words!"
Whereat the others joined with inward glee
Her pealing mirth; and in the merriment
The knights chimed too, and he, the vanquished one,
Till all the wood rang as at hunting-tide
When bugle-rumors float about the air
And echoes leap and revel in delight.
Then spake the vanquished knight, with mental eye
Sweeping the vantage-ground that chance had gained,—
"Your further pardon, lady: Since the name
Of Raelus fell from those lips of thine,
We fain would know of him. He led us here,
And as he went the way from whence your path

Emerges, haply you may tell us where
He may be found?"
"What! Raelus?" she cried,—
"He comes with you?—The brave Sir Raelus?—
That mighty champion?—that gallant knight?—
That peerless wonder of all nobleness?
Then proud am I to greet ye, knowing that;
And, certes, had I known of it ere now,
Then had I proffered you more courtesy,
And told you, ere the asking, that he bides
The coming of his friends a league from this,
Hard by a reedy mere, where in high tune
We left him singing, nigh an hour agone."
Then, as she lightly wheeled her horse about
And signal gave to her companions
To follow, gaily cried: "Tell Raelus
His cousin sends to him her sad farewells
And fond regrets, and kisses many as
His valorous deeds are numbered in her heart."
And with "Fair morrow to ye, gentle knights!"
Her steed's hooves struck the highway at a bound;
And dimly thro' the dust they saw her lead
Her fluttering cavalcade as recklessly
As might a queen of Araby, fleet-horsed,
Skim o'er the level sands of Syria.
So vanished. And the knights with one accord
Put foot in stirrup, and with puzzled minds

And many-channeled marvelings, filed in
The woody path, and fared them on and on
Thro' denser glooms, and ways more intricate;
Till, mystified at last and wholly lost,
They made full halt, and would have turned them back
But that a sudden voice brake on their ears
All piteous and wailing, as distressed:
And, following these cries, they sharply came
Upon an open road that circled round
A reedy flat and sodden tract of sedge,
Moated with stagnant water, crusted thick
With slimy moss, wherein were wriggling things
Entangled, and blind bubbles bulging up
And bursting where from middle way upshot
A tree-trunk, with its knarled and warty hands
As tho' upheld to clutch at sliding snakes
Or nip the wet wings of the dragonfly.
Here gazing, lo! they saw their comrade, he
That had gone on with Raelus; and he
Was tugging to fling back into its place
A heavy log that once had spanned the pool
And made a footway to the sedgy flat
Whence came the bitter wailing cries they heard.
Then hastened they to join him in his task;
But, panting, as they asked of Raelus,
All winded with his work, yet jollier

Than meadow-lark at morn, he sent his voice
In such a twittering of merriment,
The wail of sorrow died and laughter strewed
Its grave with melody.
"O Raelus!
Rare Raelus!" he cried and clapped his hands,
And even in the weeds that edged the pool
Fell wrestling with his mirth.—"Why, Raelus,"
He said, when he at last could speak again,
"Drew magnet-like—you know that talk of his,—
And so, adhesive, did I cling and cling
Until I found us in your far advance,
And, hidden in the wood, I stayed to say
'Twas better we should bide your coming. 'No.'
Then on again; and still a second time—
'Shall we not bide their coming?' 'No!' he said;
And on again, until the third; and 'No—
We'll push a little further.' As we did;
And, sudden, came upon an open glade—
There to the northward,—by a thicket bound:
Then he dismounted, giving me his rein,
And, charging me to keep myself concealed,
And if he were not back a certain time
To ride for you and search where he had gone,
He crossed the opening and passed from sight
Within the thicket. I was curious:
And so, dismounting, tethered our two steeds

And followed him; and, creeping warily,
Came on him where—unseen of him—I saw
Him pause before the cave himself described
Before us yester-noon. And here he put
His fingers to his lips and gave a call
Bird-like and quavering: at which a face,
As radiant as summer sun at morn,
Parted the viny courtains of the cave;
And then, a moment later, came in view,
A woman even fairer than my sight
Might understand. 'What! dare you come again?'
As, lifting up her eyes all flashingly,
She scorched him with a look of hate.—'Begone!
Or have you—traitor, villain, knave and cur,—
Bro't minions of the law to carry out
The vengeance of your whimpering jealousy?'
Then Raelus, all cowering before
Her queenly anger, faltered: 'Hear me yet;
I do not threaten. But your love—your love!—
O give me that. I know you pure as dew:
Your love! Your love!—The smile that has gone
out
And left my soul a midnight of despair!—
Your love or life! For I have even now
Your stronghold girt about with certain doom
If you but waver in your choice.—Your love!'
At which, as quick as tho't, leapt on him there

A strong man from the covert of the gloom;
And others, like to him, from here and there
Came skurrying. I, turning, would have fled,
But found myself as suddenly beset
And tied and tumbled there with Raelus.
And him they haltered by his squirming heels
Until he did confess such villainy
As made me wonder if his wits were sound—
Confessed himself a renegade—a thief—
Aye, even one of them, save that he knew
Not that nice honour even thieves may claim
Among themselves.—And so ran on thro' such
A catalogue of littlenesses, I
For deafest shame had even stopped my ears
But that my wrists were lockt. And when he came
To his confession of his lie at court,
By which was gained our knightly sympathy
And valiant service on this fools' crusade,
I seemed to feel the redness of my blush
Soak thro' my very soul. There I brake in:
'Fair lady and most gallant,—to my shame
Do I admit we have been duped by such
An ingrate as this bundled lump of flesh
That I am helpless to rise up and spurn:
Unbind me, and I promise such amends
As knightly hands may deign to wreak upon
A thing so vile as he.' Then, laughing, she:

'First tell me, by your honor, where await
Your knightly brothers and my enemies.'
To which I answered, truthfully, I knew
Not where you lingered, but not close at hand
I was assured. Then all abrupt, she turned:
'Get every one within! We ride at once!'
And scarce a dozen minutes ere they came
Out-pouring from the cave in such a guise
As made me smile from very wonderment.—
From head to heel in woman's dress they came,
Clad richly, too, and trapped and tricked withal
As maidenly, but in the face and hand,
As ever damsels flock at holiday.
Then were their chargers bro't, caparisoned
In keeping; and they mounted, lifting us,
Still bounden, with much jest and mockery
Of soft caress and wanton blandishments,
As tho' they were of sex their dress declared.
And so they carried us until they came
Upon the road there as it nicks the copse;
And so drew rein, dismounted, leaving some
To guard their horses; hurried us across
This footway to the middle of the flat.
Here Raelus was bounden to a tree,
Stript to the waist; my fetters cut,
A long, keen switch put in my hand, and 'Strike!
Strike as all duty bids you!' said the queen.

And so I did, with right good will at first:
Till, softened as I heard the wretch's prayers
Of anguish, I at last withheld my hand.
'What! tiring?' chirpt the queen: 'Give me the stick!'
And swish, and swish, and mercy how it rained!
Then all the others, forming circlewise,
Danced round and round the howling wretch, and jeered
And japed at him, and mocked and scoffed at him,
And spat upon him. And I turned away
And hid my face; then raised it pleadingly:
Nor would they listen my appeal for him;
But left him so, and thonged and took me back
Across the mere, and drew the bridge, that none
Might go to him, and carried me with them
Far on their way, and freed me once again;
And back I turned, tho' loth, to succor him."
And even as he ceased they heard the wail
Break out anew, and crossed without a word,
And Raelus they found, and without word
They loosed him. And he brake away and ran
As runs a lie the truth is hard upon.

Thus did it fare with Raelus. And they
Who knew of it said naught at court of it;
Nor from that day spake ever of him once,
Nor heard of him again, nor cared to hear.

DOLORES

LITHE-ARMED, and with satin-soft shoulders
As white as the cream-crested wave;
With a gaze dazing every beholder's,
She holds every gazer a slave:
Her hair, a fair haze, is outfloated
And flared in the air like a flame;
Bare-breasted, bare-browed and bare-throated—
Too smooth for the soothliest name.

She wiles you with wine, and wrings for you
Ripe juices of citron and grape;
She lifts up her lute and sings for you
Till the soul of you seeks no escape;
And you revel and reel with mad laughter,
And fall at her feet, at her beck,
And the scar of her sandal thereafter
You wear like a gyve round your neck.

WHEN I DO MOCK

WHEN I do mock the blackness of the night
With my despair—outweep the very dews
And wash my wan cheeks stark of all delight,
Denying every counsel of dear use
In mine embittered state; with infinite
Perversity, mine eyes drink in no sight
Of pleasance that nor moon nor stars refuse
In silver largess and gold twinklings bright;—
I question me what mannered brain is mine
That it doth trick me of the very food
It panteth for—the very meat and wine
That yet should plump my starvéd soul with good
And comfortable plethora of ease,
That I might drowse away such rhymes as these.

MY MARY

MY Mary, O my Mary!
The simmer-skies are blue:
The dawnin' brings the dazzle,
An' the gloamin' brings the dew,—
The mirk o' nicht the glory
O' the moon, an' kindles, too,
The stars that shift aboon the lift.—
But nae thing brings me you!

Where is it, O my Mary,
Ye are biding a' the while?
I ha' wended by your window—
I ha' waited by the stile,
An' up an' down the river
I ha' won for mony a mile,
Yet never found, adrift or drown'd,
Your lang-belated smile.

Is it forgot, my Mary,
How glad we used to be?—
The simmer-time when bonny bloomed
The auld trysting-tree,—
How there I carved the name for you,
An' you the name for me;
An' the gloamin' kenned it only
When we kissed sae tenderly.

Speek ance to me, my Mary!—
  But whisper in my ear
As light as ony sleeper's breath,
  An' a' my soul will hear;
My heart shall stap its beating,
  An' the soughing atmosphere
Be hushed the while I leaning smile
  An' listen to you, dear!

My Mary, O my Mary!
  The blossoms bring the bees;
The sunshine brings the blossoms,
  An' the leaves on a' the trees;
The simmer brings the sunshine
  An' the fragrance o' the breeze,—
But O wi'out you, Mary,
  I care nae thing for these!

We were sae happy, Mary!
  O think how ance we said—
Wad ane o' us gae fickle,
  Or ane o' us lie dead,—
To feel anither's kisses
  We wad feign the auld instead,
An' ken the ither's footsteps
  In the green grass owerhead.

My Mary, O my Mary!
  Are ye dochter o' the air,
That ye vanish aye before me
  As I follow everywhere?—
Or is it ye are only
  But a mortal, wan wi' care?—
Syne I search through a' the kirkyird
  An' I dinna find ye there.

EROS

THE storm of love has burst at last
Full on me: All the world, before,
Was like an alien, unknown shore
Along whose verge I laughing passed.—
But now—I laugh not any more,—
Bowed with a silence vast in weight
As that which falls on one who stands
For the first time on ocean sands,
Seeing and feeling all the great
Awe of the waves as they wash the lands
And billow and wallow and undulate.

ORLIE WILDE

A GODDESS, with a siren's grace,—
A sun-haired girl on a craggy place
Above a bay where fish-boats lay
Drifting about like birds of prey.

Wrought was she of a painter's dream,—
Wise only as are artists wise,
My artist-friend, Rolf Herschkelhiem,
With deep sad eyes of oversize,
And face of melancholy guise.

I pressed him that he tell to me
This masterpiece's history.
He turned—returned—and thus beguiled
Me with the tale of Orlie Wilde:—

"We artists live ideally:
We breed our firmest facts of air;
We make our own reality—
We dream a thing and it is so.
The fairest scenes we ever see
Are mirages of memory;

The sweetest thoughts we ever know
We plagiarize from Long-ago:
And as the girl on canvas there
Is marvelously rare and fair,
'Tis only inasmuch as she
Is dumb and may not speak to me!"
He tapped me with his mahlstick—then
The picture,—and went on again:

"Orlie Wilde, the fisher's child—
I see her yet, as fair and mild
As ever nursling summer-day
Dreamed on the bosom of the bay:
For I was twenty then, and went
Alone and long-haired—all content
With promises of sounding name
And fantasies of future fame,
And thoughts that now my mind discards
As editor a fledgling bard's.

"At evening once I chanced to go,
With pencil and portfolio,
Adown the street of silver sand
That winds beneath this craggy land,
To make a sketch of some old scurf
Of driftage, nosing through the surf
A splintered mast, with knarl and strand

Of rigging-rope and tattered threads
Of flag and streamer and of sail
That fluttered idly in the gale
Or whipped themselves to sadder shreds.
The while I wrought, half listlessly,
On my dismantled subject, came
A sea-bird, settling on the same
With plaintive moan, as though that he
Had lost his mate upon the sea;
And—with my melancholy trend—
It brought dim dreams half understood—
It wrought upon my morbid mood,—
I thought of my own voyagings
That had no end—that have no end.—
And, like the sea-bird, I made moan
That I was loveless and alone.
And when at last with weary wings
It went upon its wanderings,
With upturned face I watched its flight
Until this picture met my sight:
A goddess, with a siren's grace,—
A sun-haired girl on a craggy place
Above a bay where fish-boats lay
Drifting about like birds of prey.

"In airy poise she, gazing, stood
A matchless form of womanhood,

That brought a thought that if for me
Such eyes had sought across the sea,
I could have swam the widest tide
That ever mariner defied,
And, at the shore, could on have gone
To that high crag she stood upon,
To there entreat and say 'My Sweet,
Behold thy servant at thy feet.'
And to my soul I said: 'Above,
There stands the idol of thy love!'

"In this rapt, awed, ecstatic state
I gazed—till lo! I was aware
A fisherman had joined her there—
A weary man, with halting gait,
Who toiled beneath a basket's weight:
Her father, as I guessed, for she
Had run to meet him gleefully
And ta'en his burden to herself,
That perched upon her shoulder's shelf
So lightly that she, tripping, neared
A jutting crag and disappeared;
But left the echo of a song
That thrills me yet, and will as long
As I have being!.....

....."Evenings came
And went,—but each the same—the same:

She watched above, and even so
I stood there watching from below;
Till, grown so bold at last, I sung,—
(What matter now the theme thereof!)—
It brought an answer from her tongue—
Faint as the murmur of a dove,
Yet all the more the song of love....

"I turned and looked upon the bay,
With palm to forehead—eyes a-blur
In the sea's smile—meant but for her!—
I saw the fish-boats far away
In misty distance, lightly drawn
In chalk-dots on the horizon—
Looked back at her, long, wistfully,—
And, pushing off an empty skiff,
I beckoned her to quit the cliff
And yield me her rare company
Upon a little pleasure cruise.—
She stood, as lothful to refuse—
To muse for full a moment's time,—
Then answered back in pantomime
'She feared some danger from the sea
Were she discovered thus with me.'
I motioned then to ask her if
I might not join her on the cliff;
And back again, with graceful wave

Of lifted arm, she answer gave
'She feared some danger from the sea.'

"Impatient, piqued, impetuous, I
Sprang in the boat, and flung 'Good-bye'
From pouted mouth with angry hand,
And madly pulled away from land
With lusty stroke, despite that she
Held out her hands entreatingly:
And when far out, with covert eye
I shoreward glanced, I saw her fly
In reckless haste adown the crag,
Her hair a-flutter like a flag
Of gold that danced across the strand
In little mists of silver sand.
All curious I, pausing, tried
To fancy what it all implied,—
When suddenly I found my feet
Were wet; and, underneath the seat
On which I sat, I heard the sound
Of gurgling waters, and I found
The boat aleak alarmingly....
I turned and looked upon the sea,
Whose every wave seemed mocking me;
I saw the fishers' sails once more—
In dimmer distance than before;
I saw the sea-bird wheeling by,

With foolish wish that *I* could fly:
I thought of firm earth, home and friends—
I thought of everything that tends
To drive a man to frenzy and
To wholly lose his own command;
I thought of all my waywardness—
Thought of a mother's deep distress;
Of youthful follies yet unpurged—
Sins, as the seas, about me surged—
Thought of the printer's ready pen
Tomorrow drowning me again;—
A million things without a name—
I thought of everything but—Fame....

"A memory yet is in my mind,
So keenly clear and sharp-defined,
I picture every phase and line
Of life and death, and neither mine,—
While some fair seraph, golden-haired,
Bends over me,—with white arms bared,
That strongly plait themselves about
My drowning weight and lift me out—
With joy too great for words to state
Or tongue to dare articulate!

"And this seraphic ocean-child
And heroine was Orlie Wilde:
And thus it was I came to hear

Her voice's music in my ear—
Aye, thus it was Fate paved the way
That I walk desolate today!".....

The artist paused and bowed his face
Within his palms a little space,
While reverently on his form
I bent my gaze and marked a storm
That shook his frame as wrathfully
As some typhoon of agony,
And fraught with sobs—the more profound
For that peculiar laughing sound
We hear when strong men weep....I lent
With warmest sympathy—I bent
To stroke with soothing hand his brow,
He murmuring—"'Tis over now!—
And shall I tie the silken thread
Of my frail romance?" "Yes," I said.—
He faintly smiled; and then, with brow
In kneading palm, as one in dread—
His tasseled cap pushed from his head;—
"'Her voice's music,' I repeat,"
He said,—"'twas sweet—O passing sweet!—
Though she herself, in uttering
Its melody, proved not the thing
Of loveliness my dreams made meet
For me—there, yearning, at her feet—

Prone at her feet—a worshiper,—
For lo! she spake a tongue," moaned he,
"Unknown to me;—unknown to me
As mine to her—as mine to her."

LEONAINIE

LEONAINIE—Angels named her;
And they took the light
Of the laughing stars and framed her
In a smile of white;
And they made her hair of gloomy
Midnight, and her eyes of bloomy
Moonshine, and they brought her to me
In the solemn night.—

In a solemn night of summer,
When my heart of gloom
Blossomed up to greet the comer
Like a rose in bloom;
All forebodings that distressed me
I forgot as Joy caressed me—
(*Lying* Joy! that caught and pressed me
In the arms of doom!)

Only spake the little lisper
In the Angel-tongue;
Yet I, listening, heard her whisper—
"Songs are only sung
Here below that they may grieve you—
Tales but told you to deceive you,—
So must Leonainie leave you
While her love is young."

Then God smiled and it was morning.
Matchless and supreme,
Heaven's glory seemed adorning
Earth with its esteem:
Every heart but mine seemed gifted
With the voice of prayer, and lifted
Where my Leonainie drifted
From me like a dream.

TO A JILTED SWAIN

GET thee back neglected friends;
And repay, as each one lends,
Tithes of shallow-sounding glee
Or keen-ringing raillery:
Get thee from lone vigils; be
But in jocund company,
Where is laughter and acclaim
Boisterous above the name.—
Get where sulking husbands sip
Alehouse cheer, with pipe at lip;
And where Mol the barmaid saith
Curst is she that marryeth.

THE VOICES

DOWN in the night I hear them:
  The Voices—unknown—unguessed,—
That whisper, and lisp, and murmur,
  And will not let me rest.—

Voices that seem to question,
  In unknown words, of me,
Of fabulous ventures, and hopes and dreams
  Of this and the World to be.

Voices of mirth and music,
  As in sumptuous homes; and sounds
Of mourning, as of gathering friends
  In country burial-grounds.

Cadence of maiden voices—
  Their lovers' blent with these;
And of little children singing,
  As under orchard trees.

And often, up from the chaos
  Of my deepest dreams, I hear
Sounds of their phantom laughter
  Filling the atmosphere:

They call to me from the darkness;
  They cry to me from the gloom,
Till I start sometimes from my pillow
  And peer through the haunted room;

When the face of the moon at the window
  Wears a pallor like my own,
And seems to be listening with me
  To the low, mysterious tone,—

The low, mysterious clamor
  Of voices that seem to be
Striving in vain to whisper
  Of secret things to me;—

Of a something dread to be warned of;
  Of a rapture yet withheld;
Or hints of the marvelous beauty
  Of songs unsyllabled.

But ever and ever the meaning
  Falters and fails and dies,
And only the silence quavers
  With the sorrow of my sighs.

And I answer:—O Voices, ye may not
Make me to understand
Till my own voice, mingling with you,
Laughs in the Shadow-land.

A BAREFOOT BOY

A BAREFOOT BOY! I mark him at his play—
For May is here once more, and so is he,—
His dusty trousers, rolled half to the knee,
And his bare ankles grimy, too, as they:
Cross-hatchings of the nettle, in array
Of feverish stripes, hint vividly to me
Of woody pathways winding endlessly
Along the creek, where even yesterday
He plunged his shrinking body—gasped and shook—
Yet called the water "warm," with never lack
Of joy. And so, half enviously I look
Upon this graceless barefoot and his track,—
His toe stubbed—aye, his big toe-nail knocked back
Like unto the clasp of an old pocket-book.

THE YOUTHFUL PATRIOT

O WHAT did the little boy do
'At nobody wanted him to?
Didn't do nothin' but romp an' run,
An' whoop an' holler an' bang his gun
An' bust fire-crackers, an' ist have fun—
An' *'at's* all the little boy done!

PONCHUS PILUT

PONCHUS PILUT *used* to be
Ist a *Slave*, an' now he's *free*.
Slaves wuz on'y ist before
The War wuz—an' *ain't* no more.

He works on our place fer us,—
An' comes here—*sometimes* he does.
He shocks corn an' shucks it.—An'
He makes hominy "by han'!"—

Wunst he bringed us some, one trip,
Tied up in a piller-slip:
Pa says, when Ma cooked it, "MY!
This-here's gooder'n you *buy!*"

Ponchus *pats* fer me an' sings;
An' he says most *funny* things!
Ponchus calls a dish a "*deesh*"—
Yes, an' *he* calls fishes "*feesh*"!

When Ma want him eat wiv us
He says, "'Skuse me—'deed you mus'!—
Ponchus know good manners, Miss.—
He aint eat wher' White-folks is!"

'Lindy takes *his* dinner out
Wher' he's workin'—roun' about.—
Wunst he et his dinner, spread
In our ole wheel-borry-bed.

Ponchus Pilut says "'*at's* not
His *right* name,—an' done fergot
What his *sho'-nuff* name is now—
An' don' matter none *no*how!"

Yes, an' Ponchus he'ps Pa, too,
When our *butcherin's* to do,
An' scalds hogs—an' says "Take care
'Bout it, er you'll *set the hair!*"

Yes, an' out in our back-yard
He he'ps 'Lindy rendur lard;
An', wite in the fire there, he
Roast' a pig-tail wunst fer me.—

An' 'ist nen th'ole tavurn-bell
Rung, down town, an' he says "Well!—
Hear dat! *Lan' o' Caanan*, Son,
Aint dat bell say '*Pig-tail done!*'

—'*Pig-tail done!*
Go call Son!—
Tell dat
Chile dat
Pig-tail done!''

A TWINTORETTE

HO! my little maiden
With the glossy tresses,
Come thou and dance with me
A measure all divine;
Let my breast be laden
With but thy caresses—
Come thou and glancingly
Mate thy face with mine.

Thou shalt trill a rondel,
While my lips are purling
Some dainty twitterings
Sweeter than the birds';
And, with arms that fondle
Each as we go twirling,
We will kiss, with titterings,
Lisps and loving words.

SLUMBER-SONG

SLEEP, little one! The Twilight folds her gloom
Full tenderly about the drowsy Day,
And all his tinseled hours of light and bloom
Like toys are laid away.

Sleep! sleep! The noon-sky's airy cloud of white
Has deepened wide o'er all the azure plain;
And, trailing through the leaves, the skirts of Night
Are wet with dews as rain.

But rest thou sweetly, smiling in thy dreams,
With round fists tossed like roses o'er thy head,
And thy tranc'd lips and eyelids kissed with gleams
Of rapture perfected.

THE CIRCUS PARADE

THE CIRCUS!—The Circus!—The throb of the drums,
And the blare of the horns, as the Band-wagon comes;
The clash and the clang of the cymbals that beat,
As the glittering pageant winds down the long street!

In the Circus parade there is glory clean down
From the first spangled horse to the mule of the Clown,
With the gleam and the glint and the glamour and glare
Of the days of enchantment all glimmering there!

And there are the banners of silvery fold
Caressing the winds with their fringes of gold,
And their high-lifted standards, with spear-tips aglow,
And the helmeted knights that go riding below.

There's the Chariot, wrought of some marvelous shell
The Sea gave to Neptune, first washing it well
With its fabulous waters of gold, till it gleams
Like the galleon rare of an Argonaut's dreams.

And the Elephant, too, (with his undulant stride
That rocks the high throne of a king in his pride),
That in jungles of India shook from his flanks
The tigers that leapt from the Jujubee-banks.

Here's the long, ever-changing, mysterious line
Of the Cages, with hints of their glories divine
From the barred little windows, cut high in the rear,
Where the close-hidden animals' noses appear.

Here's the Pyramid-car, with its splendor and flash,
And the Goddess on high, in a hot-scarlet sash
And a pen-wiper skirt!—O the rarest of sights
Is this "Queen of the Air" in cerulean tights!

Then the far-away clash of the cymbals, and then
The swoon of the tune ere it wakens again
With the capering tones of the gallant cornet
That go dancing away in a mad minuet.

The Circus!—The Circus!—The throb of the drums,
And the blare of the horns, as the Band-wagon comes;
The clash and the clang of the cymbals that beat,
As the glittering pageant winds down the long street.

FOLKS AT LONESOMEVILLE

PORE-FOLKS lives at Lonesomeville—
  Lawzy! but they're pore!
Houses with no winders in,
  And hardly any door:
Chimbly all tore down, and no
  Smoke in that at all—
Ist a stovepipe through a hole
  In the kitchen-wall!

Pump that's got no handle on;
  And no woodshed—And, *wooh!*—
Mighty cold there, choppin' wood,
  Like pore-folks has to do!—
Winter-time, and snow and sleet
  Ist fairly fit to kill!—
Hope to goodness *Santy Claus*
  Goes to Lonesomeville!

THE THREE JOLLY HUNTERS

O THERE were three jolly hunters;
And a-hunting they did go,
With a spaniel-dog, and a pointer-dog,
And a setter-dog also.
Looky there!

And they hunted and they hal-looed;
And the first thing they did find
Was a dingling-dangling hornet's-nest
A-swinging in the wind.
Looky there!

And the first one said—"What is it?"
Said the next, "We'll punch and see:"
And the next one said, a mile from there,
"I wish we'd let it be!"
Looky there!

And they hunted and they hal-looed;
And the next thing they did raise
Was a bobbin' bunnie cotton-tail
That vanished from their gaze.
Looky there!

One said it was a hot baseball,
  Zippt through the brambly thatch,
But the others said 'twas a note by post,
  Or a telegraph-dispatch.
    Looky there!

So they hunted and they hal-looed;
  And the next thing they did sight
Was a great big bulldog chasing them,
  And a farmer, hollerin' "Skite!"
    Looky there!

And the first one said, "Hi-jinktum!"
  And the next, "Hi-jinktum-jee!"
And the last one said, "Them very words
  Had just occurred to me!
    Looky there!"

THE LITTLE DOG-WOGGY

A LITTLE Dog-Woggy
Once walked round the World:
So he shut up his house; and, forgetting
His two puppy-children
Locked in there, he curled
Up his tail in pink bombazine netting,
And set out
To walk round
The World.

He walked to Chicago,
And heard of the Fair—
Walked on to New York, where he *never*,—
In fact, he discovered
That many folks there
Thought less of Chicago than ever,
As he musing-
Ly walked round
The World.

He walked on to Boston,
And round Bunker Hill,
Bow-wowed, but no citizen heered him—
Till he ordered his baggage
And called for his bill,

And then, bless their souls! how they cheered
him,
As he gladly
Walked on round
The World.

He walked and walked on
For a year and a day—
Dropped down at his own door and panted,
Till a teamster came driving
Along the highway
And told him that house there was ha'nted
By the two starve-
Dest pups in
The World.

CHARMS

I

FOR CORNS AND THINGS

PRUNE your corn in the gray of the morn
With a blade that's shaved the dead,
And barefoot go and hide it so
The rain will rust it red:
Dip your foot in the dew and put
A print of it on the floor,
And stew the fat of a brindle cat,
And say this o'er and o'er:—

Corny! morny! bladey! dead!
Gorey! sorey! rusty! red!
Footsy! putsy! floory! stew!
Fatsy! catsy!
Mew!
Mew!
Come grease my corn
In the gray of the morn!
Mew! Mew! Mew!

II

TO REMOVE FRECKLES—SCOTCH ONES

GAE the mirkest night an' stan'
Twixt twa graves, ane either han';
Wi' the right han' fumblin' ken
Wha the deid mon's name's ance ben,—
Wi' the ither han' sae read
Wha's neist neebor o' the deid;
An it be or wife or lass,
Smoor tha twa han's i' the grass,
Weshin' either wi' the ither,
Then tha faice wi' baith thegither;
Syne ye'll seeket at cock-craw—
Ilka freeckle's gang awa!

A FEW OF THE BIRD-FAMILY

THE Old Bob-White, and Chipbird;
The Flicker, and Chee-wink,
And little hopty-skip bird
Along the river-brink.

The Blackbird, and Snowbird,
The Chicken-hawk, and Crane;
The glossy old black Crow-bird,
And Buzzard down the lane.

The Yellow-bird, and Redbird,
The Tom-Tit, and the Cat;
The Thrush, and that Red*head*-bird
The rest's all pickin' at!

The Jay-bird, and the Bluebird,
The Sap-suck, and the Wren—
The Cockadoodle-doo-bird,
And our old Settin'-hen!

THROUGH SLEEPY-LAND

WHERE do you go when you go to sleep,
Little Boy! Little Boy! where?
'Way—'way in where's Little Bo-Peep,
And Little Boy Blue, and the Cows and Sheep
A-wandering 'way in there—in there—
A-wandering 'way in there!

And what do you see when lost in dreams,
Little Boy, 'way in there?
Firefly-glimmers and glowworm-gleams,
And silvery, low, slow-sliding streams,
And mermaids, smiling out—'way in where
They're a-hiding—'way in there!

Where do you go when the Fairies call,
Little Boy! Little Boy! where?
Wade through the dews of the grasses tall,
Hearing the weir and the waterfall
And the Wee Folk—'way in there—in there—
And the Kelpies—'way in there!

And what do you do when you wake at dawn,
Little Boy! Little Boy! what?
Hug my Mommy and kiss her on
Her smiling eyelids, sweet and wan,
And tell her everything I've forgot
About, a-wandering 'way in there—
Through the blind-world 'way in there!

THE TRESTLE AND THE BUCK-SAW

THE Trestle and the Buck-Saw
Went out a-walking once,
And staid away and staid away
For days and weeks and months:
And when they got back home again,
Of all that had occurred,
The neighbors said the gossips said
They never said a word.

THE KING OF OO-RINKTUM-JING

DAINTY Baby Austin!
Your Daddy's gone to Boston
To see the King
Of Oo-Rinktum-Jing
And the whale he rode acrost on!

Boston Town's a city:
But O its such a pity!—
They'll greet the King
Of Oo-Rinktum-Jing
With never a nursery ditty!

But me and you and Mother
Can stay with Baby-brother,
And sing of the King
Of Oo-Rinktum-Jing
And laugh at one-another!

So what cares Baby Austin
If Daddy *has* gone to Boston
To see the King
Of Oo-Rinktum-Jing
And the whale he rode acrost on?

THE TOY PENNY-DOG

MA put my Penny-Dog
  Safe on the shelf,
And left no one home but him,
  Me and myself;
So I climbed a big chair
  I pushed to the wall—
But the Toy Penny-Dog
  Aint there at all!
I went back to Dolly—
  And *she* 'uz gone too,
And little Switch 'uz layin' there;—
  And Ma says "*Boo!*"—
And there she wuz a-peepin'
  Through the front-room door:
And I aint goin' to be a bad
  Little girl no more!

JARGON-JINGLE

TAWDERY!—faddery! Feathers and fuss!
Mummery!—flummery! wusser and wuss!
All o' Humanity—Vanity Fair!—
Heaven for nothin', and—nobody there!

THE GREAT EXPLORER

HE sailed o'er the weltery watery miles
For a tabular year-and-a-day,
To the kindless, kinkable Cannibal Isles
He sailed and he sailed away!
He captured a loon in a wild lagoon
And a yak that weeps and smiles,
And a bustard-bird, and a blue baboon,
In the kindless Cannibal Isles
And wilds
Of the kinkable Cannibal Isles.

He swiped in bats with his butterfly-net,
In the kinkable Cannibal Isles,
And got short-waisted and over-het
In the haunts of the crocodiles;
And nine or ten little Pigmy Men
Of the quaintest shapes and styles
He shipped back home to his old Aunt Jenn.
From the kindless Cannibal Isles
And wilds
Of the kinkable Cannibal Isles.

THE SCHOOLBOY'S FAVORITE

OVER the river and through the wood
Now Grandmother's cap I spy:
Hurrah for the fun! Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin-pie!
—SCHOOL READER.

FER any boy 'at's little as me,
Er any little girl,
That-un's the goodest poetry-piece
In any book in the worl'!
An' ef grown-peoples wuz little ag'in
I bet they'd say so, too,
Ef *they'd* go see *their* ole Gran'ma,
Like our Pa lets *us* do!

Over the river an' through the wood
Now Gran'mother's cap I spy:
Hurrah fer the fun!—Is the puddin' done?—
Hurrah fer the punkin-pie!

An' 'll tell you *why* 'at's the goodest piece:—
'Cause it's ist like *we* go
To *our* Gran'ma's, a-visitun there,
When our Pa he says so;

An' Ma she fixes my little cape-coat
An' little fuzz-cap; an' Pa
He tucks me away—an' yells "*Hoo-ray!*"—
An' whacks Ole Gray, an' drives the sleigh
Fastest you ever saw!

Over the river an' through the wood
Now Gran'mother's cap I spy:
Hurrah fer the fun!—Is the puddin' done?—
Hurrah for the punkin-pie!

An' Pa ist snuggles me 'tween his knees—
An' I he'p hold the lines,
An' peek out over the buffalo-robe;—
An' the wind ist *blows!*—an' the snow ist *snows!*—
An' the sun ist shines! an' shines!—
An' th' ole horse tosses his head an' coughs
The frost back in our face.—
An' I' ruther go to my Gran'ma's
Than any other place!

Over the river an' through the wood
Now Gran'mother's cap I spy:
Hurrah fer the fun!—Is the puddin' done?—
Hurrah fer the punkin-pie!

An' all the peoples they is in town
Watches us whizzin' past
To go a-visitun *our* Gran'ma's,
Like we all went there last;—
But *they* can't go, like ist *our* folks
An' Johnny an' Lotty, an' three
Er four neighber-childerns, an' Rober-ut Volney
An' Charley an' Maggy an' me!

Over the river an' through the wood
Now Gran'mother's cap I spy:
Hurrah fer the fun!—Is the puddin' done?—
Hurrah fer the punkin-pie!

ALBUMANIA

Some certain misty yet tenable signs
Of the oracular Raggedy Man,
Happily found in these fugitive lines
Culled from the album of 'Lizabuth Ann.

FRIENDSHIP

O FRIENDSHIP, when I muse on you,
As thoughtful minds, O Friendship, do,
I muse, O Friendship, o'er and o'er,
O Friendship—as I said before.

LIFE

"WHAT is Life?" If the *Dead* might say,
'Spect they'd answer, under breath,
Sorry-like yet a-laughin':—A
Poor pale yesterday of Death!

LIFE'S HAPPIEST HOURS

BEST, I guess,
Was the old "*Recess*."—
'Way back there's where I'd love to be—
Shet of each lesson and hateful rule,
When the whole round World was as sweet to me
As the big ripe apple I brung to School.

MARION-COUNTY MAN HOMESICK ABROAD

I, who had hob-nobbed with the shades of kings,
And canvassed grasses from old masters' graves,
And in cathedrals stood and looked at things
In niches, crypts and naves;—
My heavy heart was sagging with its woe,
Nor Hope to prop it up, nor Promise, nor
One woman's hands—and O I wanted so
To be felt sorry for!

BIRDY! BIRDY!

THE Redbreast loves the blooming bough—
The Bluebird loves it same as he;—
And as they sit and sing there now,
So do I sing to thee—
Only, dear heart, unlike the birds,
I do not climb a tree
To sing—
I do not climb a tree.

WHEN o'er this page in happy years to come,
Thou jokest on these lines and on my name,
Doubt not my love and say, "Though he lies dumb,
He's lying, just the same!"

THE LITTLE MOCK-MAN

THE Little Mock-man on the Stairs—
He mocks the lady's horse 'at rares
  At bi-sickles an' things,—
He mocks the mens 'at rides 'em, too;
An' mocks the Movers, drivin' through,
An' hollers "Here's the way *you* do
  With them-air hitchin-strings!"
  "Ho! ho!" he'll say,
    Ole Settlers' Day,
  When they're all jogglin' by,—
  "You look like *this*,"
    He'll say, an' twis'
  His mouth an' squint his eye
An' 'tend like *he* wuz beat the bass
  Drum at both ends—an' toots and blares
Ole dinner-horn an' puffs his face—
  The Little Mock-man on the Stairs!

The Little Mock-man on the Stairs
Mocks all the peoples all he cares
  'At passes up an' down!
He mocks the chickens round the door,
An' mocks the girl 'at scrubs the floor,
An' mocks the rich, an' mocks the pore,
  An' ever'thing in town!

"Ho! ho!" says he,
To you er me;
An' ef we turns an' looks,
He's all cross-eyed
An' mouth all wide
Like Giunts is, in books.—
"Ho! ho!" he yells, "look here at *me*,"
An' rolls his fat eyes roun' an' glares,—
"*You* look like *this!*" he says, says he—
The Little Mock-man on the Stairs!

THE Little Mock—
The Little Mock—
The Little Mock-man on the Stairs,
He mocks the music-box an' clock,
An' roller-sofy an' the chairs;
He mocks his Pa an' spec's he wears;
He mocks the man 'at picks the pears
An' plums an' peaches on the shares;
He mocks the monkeys an' the bears
On picture-bills, an' rips an' tears
'Em down,—an' mocks ist all he cares,
An' EVER'body EVER'wheres!

SUMMER-TIME AND WINTER-TIME

IN the golden noon-shine,
  Or in the pink of dawn;
In the silver moonshine,
  Or when the moon is gone;
Open eyes, or drowsy lids,
 'Wake or 'most asleep,
I can hear the kitydids,—
"Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!"

Only in the winter-time
  Do they ever stop,
In the chip-and-splinter-time,
  When the backlogs pop,—
Then it is, the kettle-lids,
  While the sparkles leap,
Lisp like the katydids,—
"Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!"

HOME-MADE RIDDLES—

ALL BUT THE ANSWERS

I

NO one ever saw it
  Till I dug it from the ground;
I found it when I lost it,
  And lost it when I found:
I washed it, and dressed it,
  And buried it once more—
Dug it up, and loved it then
  Better than before.
I was paid for finding it—
  I don't know why or how,—
But I lost, found, and kept it,
  And haven't got it now.

II

Sometimes it's all alone—
  Sometimes in a crowd;
It says a thousand bright things,
  But never talks aloud.
Everbody loves it,
  And likes to have it call,

But if you shouldn't happen to,
  It wouldn't care at all.
First you see or hear of it,
  It's a-singing,—then
You may look and listen,
  But it never sings again.

THE LOVELY CHILD

LILIES are both pure and fair,
Growing midst the roses there—
Roses, too, both red and pink,
Are quite beautiful, I think.

But of all bright blossoms—best—
Purest—fairest—loveliest,—
Could there be a sweeter thing
Than a primrose, blossoming?

THE YELLOW-BIRD

HEY! my little Yellow-bird,
  What you doing there?
Like a flashing sun-ray,
  Flitting everywhere:
Dangling down the tall weeds
  And the hollyhocks,
And the lordly sunflowers
  Along the garden-walks.

Ho! my gallant Golden-bill,
  Pecking 'mongst the weeds,
You must have for breakfast
  Golden flower-seeds:
Won't you tell a little fellow
  What you have for *tea?*—
'Spect a peck o' yellow, mellow
  Pippin on the tree.

ENVOY

WHEN but a little boy, it seemed
My dearest rapture ran
In fancy ever, when I dreamed
I was a man—a man!

Now—sad perversity!—my theme
Of rarest, purest joy
Is when, in fancy blest, I dream
I am a little boy.

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